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ALIEN WORLDS™

No.5





c/o PACIFIC COMICS / 8423 Production Ave. / San Diego, CA 92121

Dear Bruce Jones,

Just recieved *Alien Worlds* No. 3. This issue is GOOD! "Dark Passage" is a wonderful team effort; your Bradbury-style descriptions and your Bruce Jones-style dialogue (I've always found your comics writing the smoothest and most natural I've read), with Yeates' art blending with and enriching the story make it a worthy one to dedicate to Roy Krenkel.

"The Inheritors" is also excellent and I take it from the credits that Scott Hampton colored his own art. It is the best color I've seen in PC so far, which is saying a lot because Steve Oliff does colors better than most, almost better than all.

"Pi in the Sky" is delightful, the story suits Steacy's art and it makes for a "fun" break between the other two longer, more "emotional" stories.

A change of subject. Your Warren reprints are an excellent idea. How many are you going to do? You are doing Wrightson, Wood and Jones and I hope more. I'd like to see the Al Williamson stories in color, as well as the Torres, Severin, Crandal and Johnny Craig stories. Are you planning such reprints?

Meanwhile, thank you for your present fine publications.

Gavin McCardle
41 Kemp Street
Kilbirnie

Wellington, New Zealand

Dear Bruce,

I've just finished reading *Alien Worlds* No. 3 and I have a suggestion that would make this comic perfect . . . Don't change a thing.

Van Hefner
3415 Jay Lane
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Bruce,

I've just come from watching *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. What does that have to do with *Alien Worlds* No. 3? Good question. The answer? Everything!

What I mean is that that's the reason I'm writing this instead of sitting in front of the idiot-box or lounging at the Airmen's Club. Bruce, I was very impressed by your writing talents when you were doing *Ka-Zar* for Marvel; I am doubly so impressed now. The tales you've spun in this issue (at least, "The Inheritors" and "Dark Passage") remind me very much of the vintage science fiction of Ray Bradbury. They are stories of ordinary people—some of whom just happen to not be human. Stories like these are the additional ingredient that sets *Alien*

Worlds apart from all the similar comics to come down the pike, even EC's. If you can keep up the wide range of stories that you've delivered in the past three issues—from rip-snorting adventure to thoughtful speculative fiction—then you've got this reader for life.

Now that you have things rolling, though; I would like to see many more writers contribute to this magazine. Don't hog the glory, Bruce! A story per issue should be enough. And as long as I'm making requests, how about doubling the pages for a \$2.00 or \$2.50 price tag—someday anyway. Tell Dave Stevens that I'm waiting for a sequel to "Aurora" from issue two; also, please don't rule out running three- or four-part serials.

I'm appreciating the alternative publishers more all the time. This is what DC's *Timewarp* should have been. My expectations are high; I hope you exceed them!

Andrew Laubacher
PSC #1, Box 129
Lackland AFB, TX 78236

Dear Bruce,

So far numbers 1 through 3 have been magnificent. Every story in every issue has been a delight to read. I did, however, come across a story in *Alien Worlds* No. 3 that did not appeal to me. It was "Pi in the Sky." For some reason I couldn't get passed the first page. It's not because it's different and it's not that I don't like war-type stories . . . I just don't know what the problem was. Do you think it could be that it is a narrated story? Nevertheless, I am always pleased with your other macabre stories. If you next ten stories stink (which I'm POSITIVE they WILL NOT) the excellence in the first three issues would make up for it.

I'm sure all fans of the old "Twilight Zone" series are overtaken by the *Alien Worlds* series. The stories have that magical outlandishness that Rod Sterling's stories had—that is what makes *Alien Worlds* such a comforting pleasure to read.

As always, the covers are exquisite (and suitable for framing). Great art and superb stories are what makes *Alien Worlds* (and *Twisted Tales* and *Berni Wrightson*; *Master of the Macabre*) a pleasure to read. Thanks for the great issues you're rolling out.

Aldis Rapsys
7131 S. Richmond Street
Chicago, IL 60629

ALIEN WORLDS, Vol. 1, No. 5, December, 1983. Published bimonthly by Pacific Comics. Bruce Jones and April Campbell, Editors. Bill Schanes and Steve Schanes, Publishers. Paul Talleday, Production Coordinator, Jon Hartz, Kevin Montano, and Ken Krueger, Circulation Managers. Office of publication: 8423 Production Avenue, San Diego, California 92121-2278 U.S.A. Telephone (619) 566-3290. *Alien Worlds*™ is ©1983 by Bruce Jones Associates. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without permission of the copyright holder. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions is intended and any such similarity is purely coincidental. Cover painting is ©1983 by John Bolton, "Lip Service"; art ©1983 by John Bolton, story ©1983 by Bruce Jones Associates. "Gamewars"; art ©1983 by Ken Steacy, story ©1983 by Bruce Jones Associates. "Plastic"; art ©1983 by Adolpho Buylia, story ©1983 by Bruce Jones Associates. "Wasteland"; art ©1983 by Tom Yeates, story ©1983 by Bruce Jones Associates. A Bruce Jones Associates Production. Printed in the United States of America.

THE MORNING DEW WAS ALWAYS PLENTIFUL HERE ON CYLIS 4 AND KLETE HAD DRUNK HIS FILL THIS DAWN. HE STRETCHED LUXURIOSLY UNDER THE WARM TROPICAL SUN AND SHOOK A DROP OF MOISTURE FROM HIS SLEEK WING CASING.

ANOTHER DAY HAD BEGUN. A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

JOHN
BOLTON
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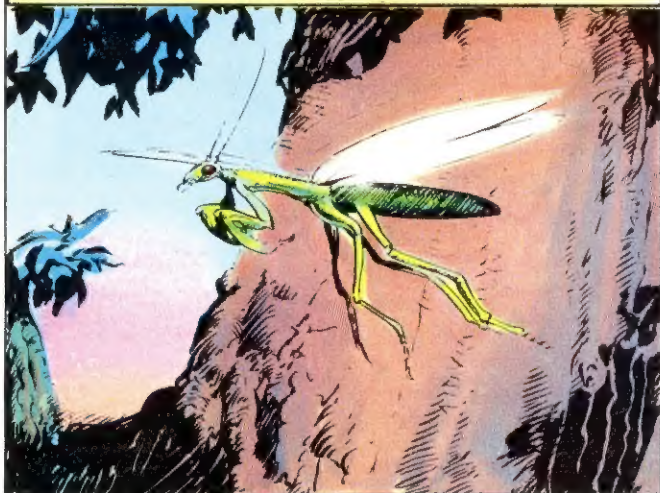
SOON THE DANGLEFLIES WOULD WARM THEMSELVES, DRY THEIR WINGS AND BUZZ INTO THE AIR. KLETE WOULD SNAG ONE OF THEM IN HIS POWERFUL FORE-CLAWS AND ENJOY A LEISURELY BREAKFAST.

HIS SWIVEL HEAD TURNED CONFIDENTLY ON ITS STALK-LIKE AXIS IN A NEAR 360 DEGREE CIRCLE. HIS ENORMOUS COMPOUND EYES SURVEYED THE LUSH JUNGLE FLORA WITH PRACTICED EASE. HE WAS KING OF HIS DOMAIN. THE AIR WAS SWEET. LIFE WAS GOOD.

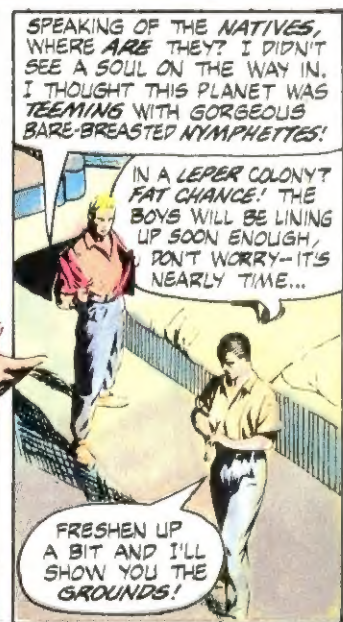
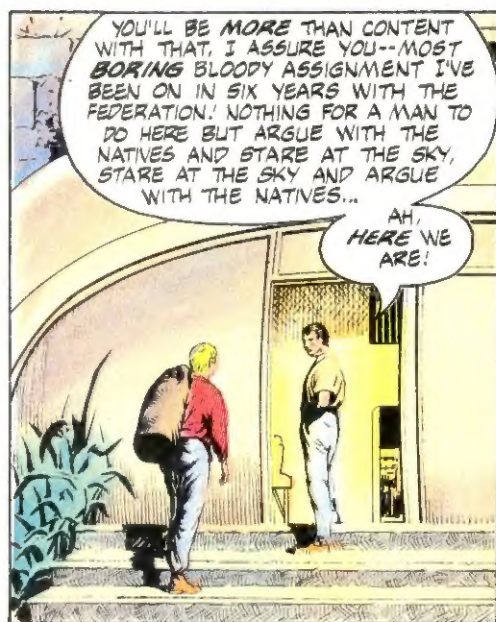
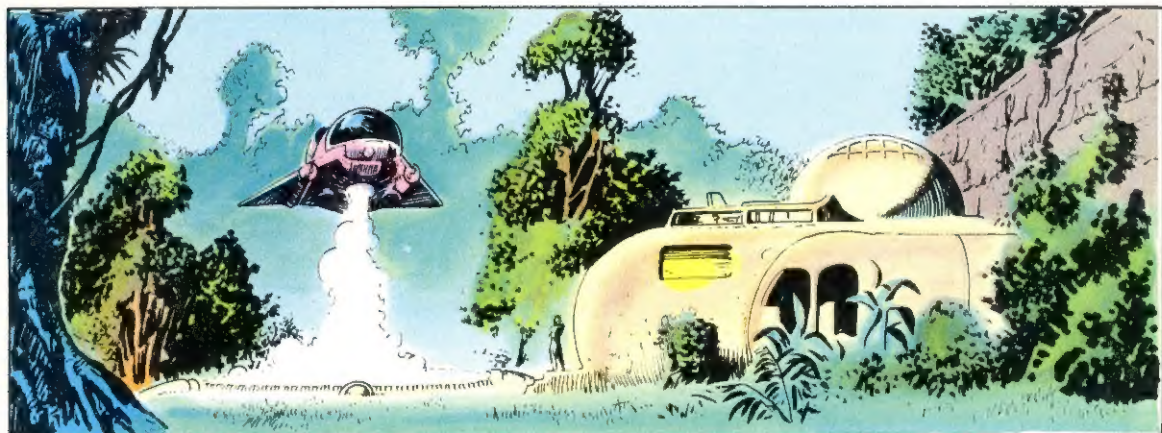
KLETE QUIVERED EXCITEDLY.

SOMETHING NEW WAS IN THE AIR TODAY...

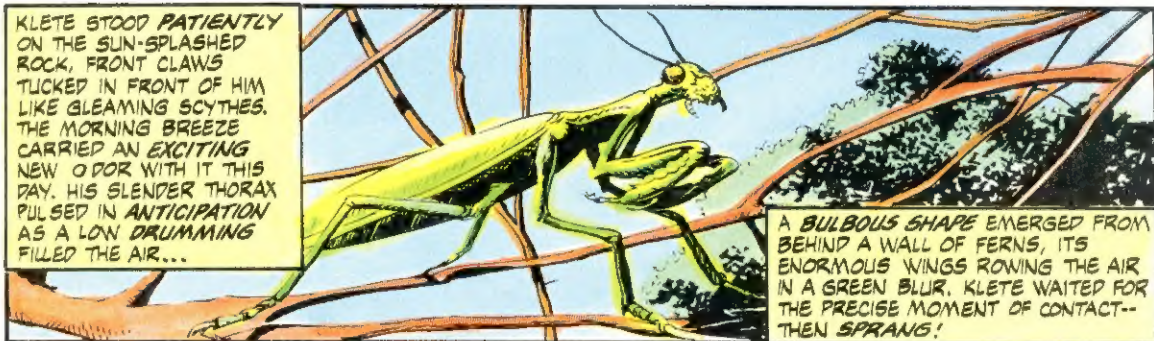
KLETE LIFTED HIS WING CASING, SPREAD THE DELICATE, TISSUE-THIN MEMBRANES, AND LIFTED GENTLY FROM THE BRANCH. SUNLIGHT SPLOYED ACROSS THE BLURRED MOTION OF HIS WINGS IN A RAINBOW OF PASTEL COLORS AS HE ARCED HIGH ABOVE THE VERDANT HILLS...



NOT BUILT FOR LONG FLIGHTS, KLETE DESCENDED WITH A LIGHT 'PLOP' ON A NEAR-BY SHAFT OF PEBBLED GRANITE. HE COCKED HIS SENSITIVE HEAD. WHAT WAS IT? WHAT HAD RAREFIED THE AIR AROUND HIM, MAKING THIS MORNING DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER HE'D EVER EXPERIENCED? KLETE FELT HIMSELF TREMBLE WITH WEAKNESS...



KLETE STOOD PATIENTLY ON THE SUN-SPLASHED ROCK, FRONT CLAWS TUCKED IN FRONT OF HIM LIKE GLEAMING SCYTHES. THE MORNING BREEZE CARRIED AN EXCITING NEW ODOR WITH IT THIS DAY. HIS SLENDER THORAX PULSED IN ANTICIPATION AS A LOW DRUMMING FILLED THE AIR...



A BULBOUS SHAPE EMERGED FROM BEHIND A WALL OF FERNS, ITS ENORMOUS WINGS ROWING THE AIR IN A GREEN BLUR. KLETE WAITED FOR THE PRECISE MOMENT OF CONTACT-- THEN *SPRANG!*



...QUITE SIMPLE, REALLY, YOU MERELY SIT BEHIND THIS DESK AND MAKE SURE NOBODY COMES OUT OF THE COLONY AND THAT ONLY LEGALLY ACCEPTABLE PERSONNEL ARE ALLOWED TO ENTER.

WHAT CONSTITUTES 'LEGALLY ACCEPTABLE PERSONNEL'?



ONE CARRYING THIS CARD WITH HIS NAME AND NUMBER PRINTED ON IT. MAKE SURE YOU CHECK BOTH! THESE BLOODY ALIENS ALL LOOK THE SAME! CAN'T TELL ONE FROM THE NEXT!

AND WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES GO BEYOND THAT GATE YOURSELF! ONCE INSIDE THOSE WALLS, YOU'RE EXPOSED TO A HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS FORM OF INCURABLE LEPROSY!



BUT WHAT ABOUT THE CARD-CARRYING NATIVES? WHO ARE THEY? WON'T THEY CONTRACT THE DISEASE?

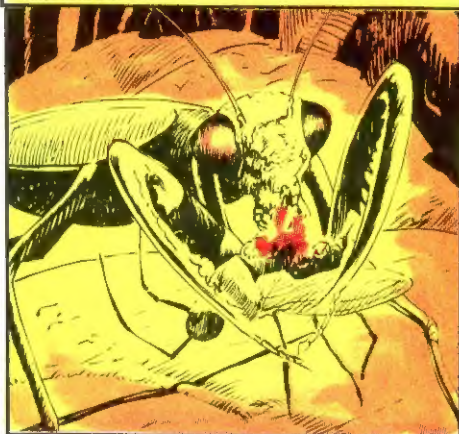


THEY'RE RELATIVES OF THE POOR WRETCHES INSIDE, AND THEY WON'T CONTRACT THE DISEASE BECAUSE A LABORATORY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PLANET HAS CHECKED THEIR BLOOD FOR THEM AND DETERMINED THEM IMMUNE. THAT'S WHY THEY'VE BEEN ISSUED THE CARDS...

IT SEEMS THAT A FEW OF THESE MISERABLE CREATURES HAVE A BUILT-IN DEFENSE AGAINST THE LEPROSY. THE FEDERATION ALLOWS THEM VISITING PRIVILEGES--BUT ONLY IF THEY HAVE THEIR CARDS! NO CARD, NO ENTRY --REMEMBER THAT!



KLETE SAT HUNCHED OVER THE PARTIALLY-DEVoured BEETLE CARCASS, MANDIBLES CLICKING **GREEDILY** AT THE SWEET, JUICY PULP HE'D EXTRACTED FROM THE CARAPACE. IT HAD BEEN A **GOOD KILL**... KLETE WAS **SATIATED**...

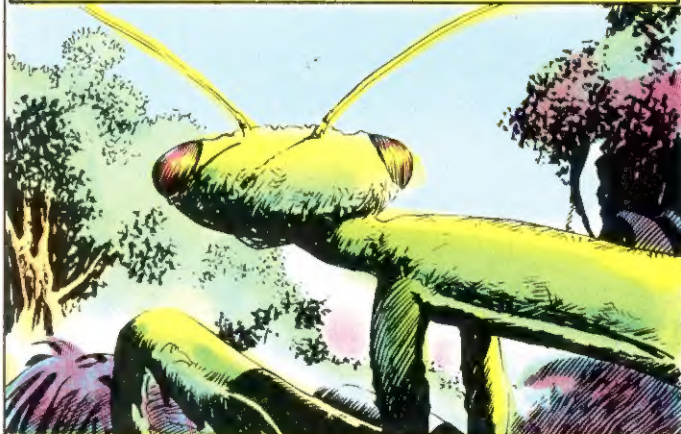


YOU MEAN THE **ENTIRE JOB** CONSISTS OF SITTING BEHIND THAT DESK ALL DAY AND CHECKING NATIVE ENTRY CARDS? THAT'S IT?

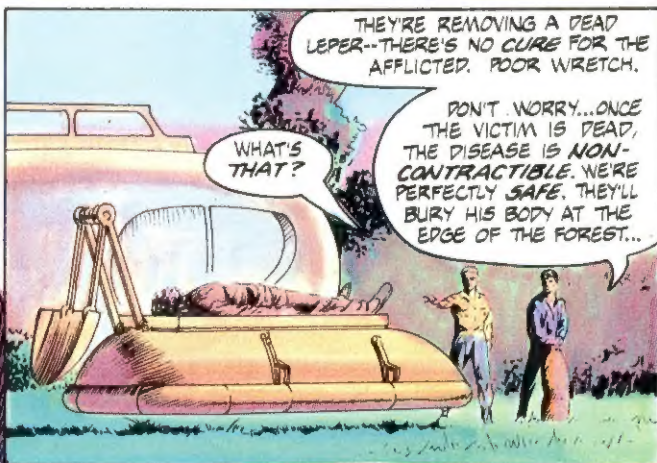


AS I SAID, YOU'LL BE **BORED** TO TEARS INSIDE A WEEK. THESE PEOPLE ARE REMARKABLY SLOW-WITTED. IT'S HOPELESS ATTEMPTING TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM VERBALLY. IF THE FEDERATION DIDN'T REGULATE THEM TO SOME DEGREE, THE **ENTIRE PLANET** WOULD BE **LEPEROUS**.

YET EVEN AS HE COMPLETED HIS MEAL, HIS DIAMOND-SHAPED HEAD SWIVELED TOWARD THE SKIES ONCE MORE, SENSITIVE MEMBRANES QUIVERING IN THE MORNING BREEZE. THIS WAS **NOT** THE ANSWER TO HIS LONGING--THIS WAS **NOT** WHAT WAS TO MAKE THIS DAY DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHERS...



SOMETHING WAS WAITING--SOMETHING JUST OUTSIDE HIS RANGE OF VISION--SOMETHING **DARK** AND **MYSTERIOUS** THAT WOULD CHANGE HIS LIFE FOREVER. KLETE QUIT THE BEETLE CARCASS AND VENTURED AGAIN INTO THE SURROUNDING FOREST...



THEY'RE REMOVING A DEAD **LEPER**--THERE'S NO CURE FOR THE AFFLICTED. POOR WRETCH.

WHAT'S THAT?

DON'T WORRY...ONCE THE VICTIM IS DEAD, THE DISEASE IS **NON-CONTRACTIBLE**. WE'RE PERFECTLY SAFE. THEY'LL BURY HIS BODY AT THE EDGE OF THE FOREST...



WHEN! NOT A PRETTY SIGHT! WHAT A **JOB!**

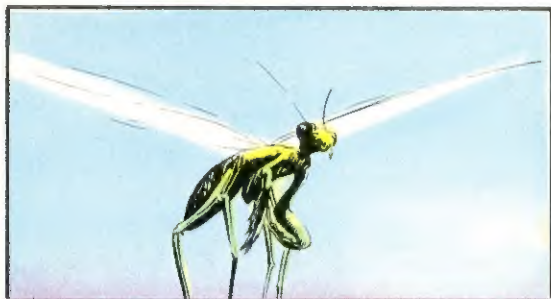
IT'LL BE **OVER** IN SIX WEEKS, PERHAPS THEN THE FEDERATION WILL SEE FIT TO GIVE YOU A MORE APPETIZING ASSIGNMENT, AS THEY HAVE ME.



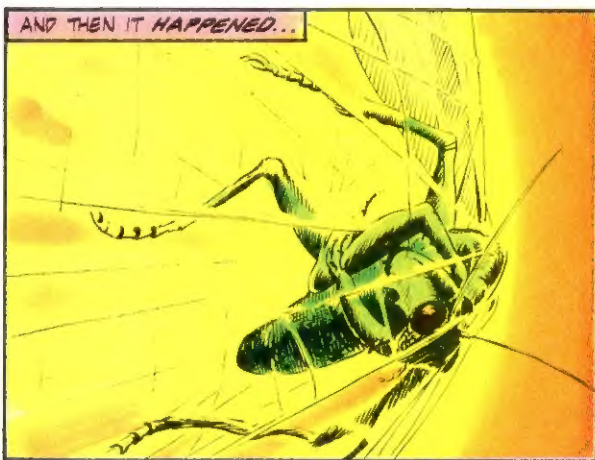
WELL, I'M OFF! **ROCKET'S WAITING!** GOOD LUCK, OLD SPORT! **CHIN UP! KEEP BUSY!**



KEEP BUSY... YEAH... **SURE...**



KLETE SOARED *HIGH* ABOVE THE JUNGLE CANOPY, SHAFTS OF SUNLIGHT EVAPORATING THE MORNING MIST AHEAD OF HIM THROUGH A RAINBOW CURTAIN. HIS ENTIRE BODY *QUIVERED* WITH PENT-UP EMOTION, THE SENSATION MOUNTING WITH EVERY SWEEP OF HIS WINGS. ANY *MOMENT* NOW... ANY *MOMENT* THE *ANSWER* WOULD BE AT HAND...



AND THEN IT HAPPENED...

KLETE TWISTED ABOUT IN *SURPRISE*. HE FLAPPED HIS WINGS IN A CONCENTRATED FURY. BUT THEY WERE *HELD FAST*... AS WERE HIS LEGS AND BODY. A TREMBLE PASSED ALONG THE SILKEN SNARE... THE WEB'S *OWNER* WAS APPROACHING...



I SAID NO CARD, NO ENTRY! DO YOU HEAR ME? NO ENTRY! GO AWAY! YOU'LL CONTRACT THE DISEASE, DUMMY!

GOD, THESE PEOPLE ARE THICK!



LORD, LOOK AT THEM! YOU'D THINK THEY HAD NOTHING BETTER TO DO WITH THEIR TIME!



HERE! HERE! BREAK THAT UP!



KNOCK IT OFF, YOU TWO! THERE'S NO NEED FOR FIGHTING AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT A CARD!



THAT EYE LOOKS PRETTY BAD, BETTER COME INSIDE AND WE'LL PUT SOMETHING ON IT!

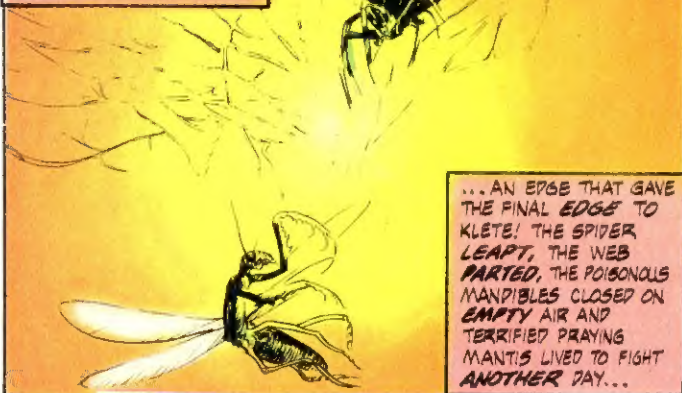
YOU GO ON HOME! YOU HEAR ME? GO HOME! YOU DON'T HAVE A CARD!

KLETE WAS NOT *TRULY* INTELLIGENT...HIS BRAIN WAS NOT *LARGE* ENOUGH FOR REAL THOUGHT. BUT, AS INSECTS GO, HIS KIND WERE KNOWN FOR THEIR CUNNING AND SKILL.



STILL, IT WAS NOT TRUE PLANNING THAT WAS TO SAVE HIS LIFE THIS DAY... IT WAS THAT BASIC EMOTION KNOWN TO ALL LIVING THINGS... *FEAR!*

FEAR GENERATED *MOVEMENT*. *MOVEMENT* GOVERNED THOSE POWERFUL HIND LEGS--LESS SERRATED WITH RAZOR-SHARP BLADES, LESS MEANT FOR JUMPING, BUT WHICH NOW SERVED AS AN EFFICIENT *CUTTING* EDGE...



...AN EDGE THAT GAVE THE FINAL *EDGE* TO KLETE! THE SPIDER LEAPT, THE WEB PARTED, THE POISONOUS MANDIBLES CLOSED ON *EMPTY* AIR AND TERRIFIED PRAYING MANTIS LIVED TO FIGHT *ANOTHER* DAY...

THAT'S QUITE A *SHINER* YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF, BUSTER! GOING TO BE SWOLLEN SHUT FOR ABOUT A WEEK I'D SAY!

HERE, WE'D BETTER PUT A PATCH ON IT TO KEEP OUT THE SUN AND THE INSECTS...

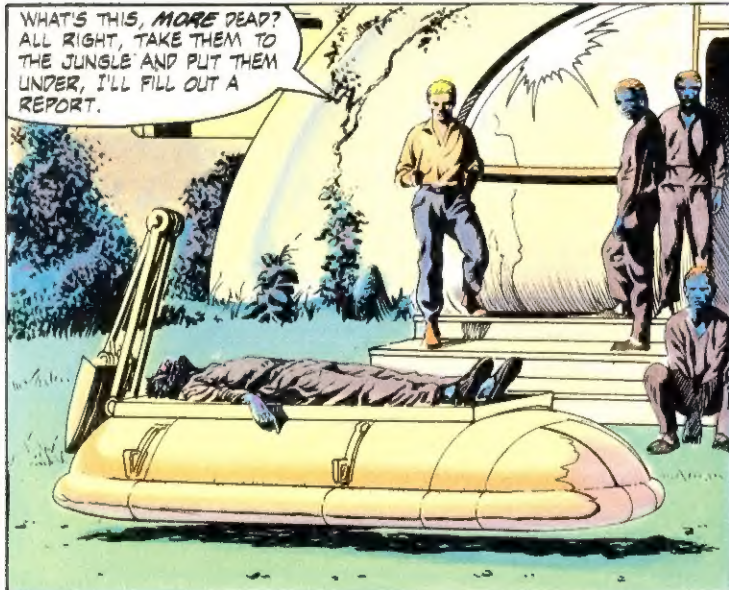


YES, YES, YOU'VE GOT YOUR CARD, YOU CAN GO IN...



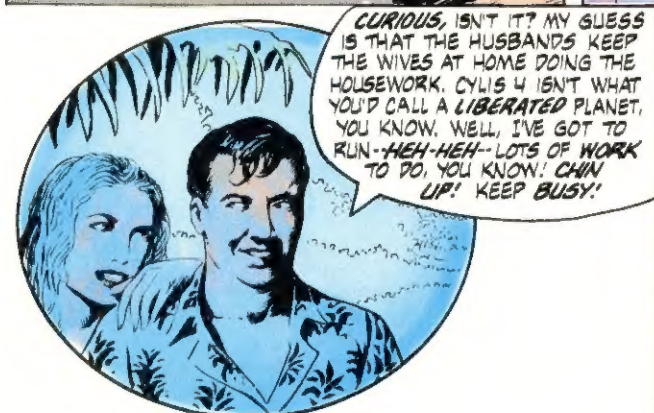
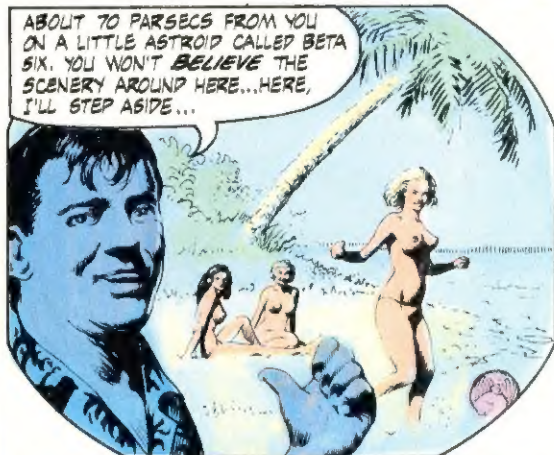
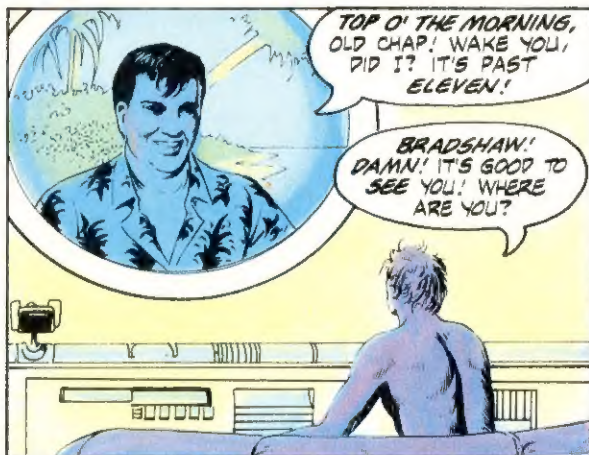
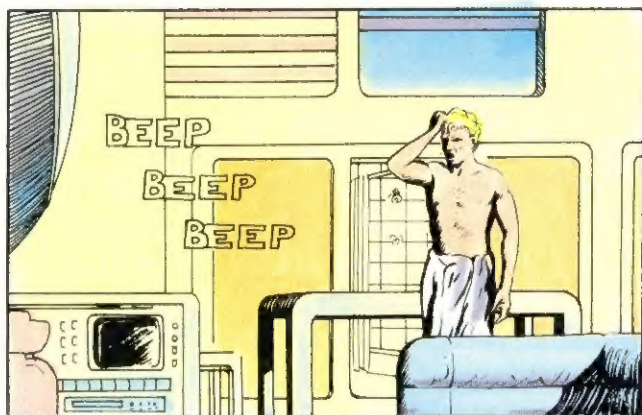
GOD, WHAT A *JOB!* ANOTHER WEEK OF *THIS* AND I'LL BE READY FOR A *STRAITJACKET!*

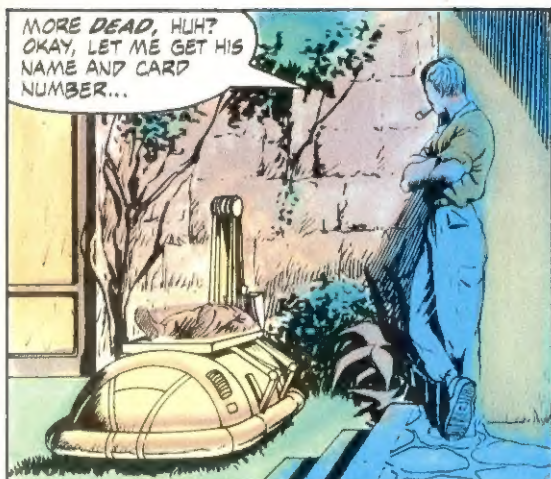
WHAT'S THIS, *MORE* DEAD? ALL RIGHT, TAKE THEM TO THE JUNGLE AND PUT THEM UNDER, I'LL FILL OUT A REPORT.



STRANGE... MEN--THEY'RE ALL *MEN...* I HAVEN'T SEEN A *WOMAN* SINCE I ARRIVED HERE...H-M-M.







MORE DEAD, HUH?
OKAY, LET ME GET HIS
NAME AND CARD
NUMBER...



WAIT! WAIT
SECOND! I KNOW
THIS MAN!
I PUT THAT PATCH
ON HIS EYE ONLY A FEW
DAYS AGO. WHAT'S
GOING ON HERE? HE
WASN'T A LEPER!
HE HAD A CARD!

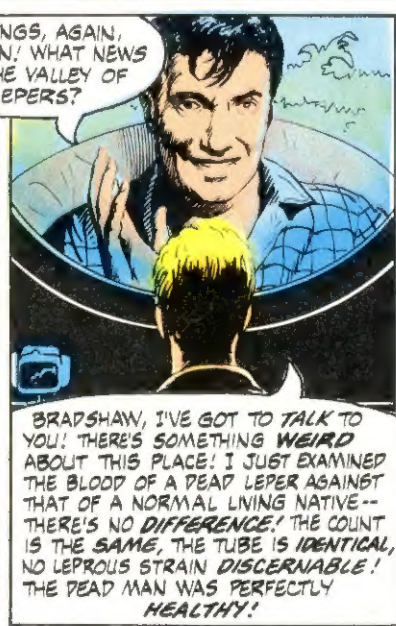


I WANT A SAMPLE OF
THIS GUY'S BLOOD!
SOMETHING SCREWY
HERE!



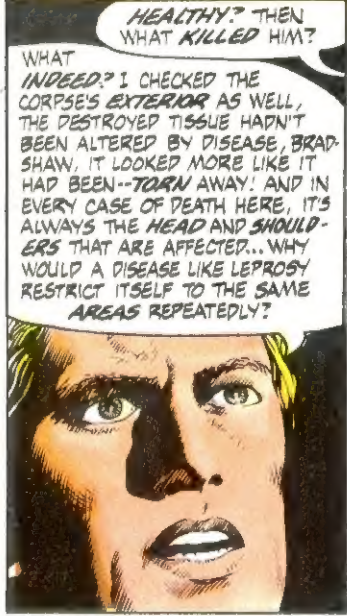
...NOW I COMPARE
THE DEAD ALIEN'S
BLOOD WITH THAT
OF A NORMAL--

HEY! WHAT
TH--THIS CAN'T
BE RIGHT!



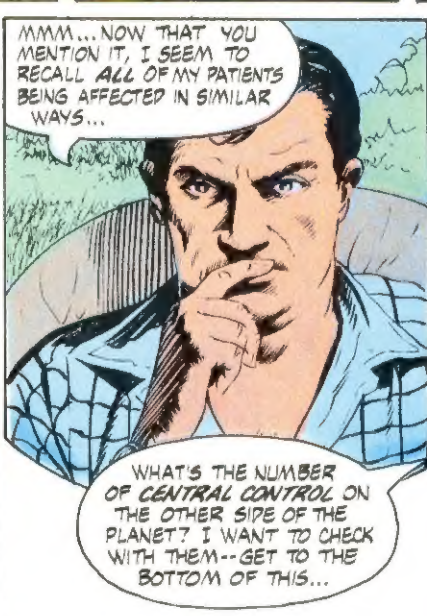
GREETINGS, AGAIN,
OLD BEAN! WHAT NEWS
FROM THE VALLEY OF
THE LEPERS?

BRADSHAW, I'VE GOT TO TALK TO
YOU! THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD
ABOUT THIS PLACE! I JUST EXAMINED
THE BLOOD OF A DEAD LEPER AGAINST
THAT OF A NORMAL LIVING NATIVE--
THERE'S NO DIFFERENCE! THE COUNT
IS THE SAME, THE TUBE IS IDENTICAL,
NO LEPROUS STRAIN DISCERNABLE!
THE DEAD MAN WAS PERFECTLY
HEALTHY!



HEALTHY? THEN
WHAT KILLED HIM?

WHAT
INDEED? I CHECKED THE
CORPSE'S EXTERIOR AS WELL,
THE DESTROYED TISSUE HADN'T
BEEN ALTERED BY DISEASE, BRAD-
SHAW, IT LOOKED MORE LIKE IT
HAD BEEN--TORN AWAY! AND IN
EVERY CASE OF DEATH HERE, IT'S
ALWAYS THE HEAD AND SHOUL-
DERS THAT ARE AFFECTED... WHY
WOULD A DISEASE LIKE LEPROSY
RESTRICT ITSELF TO THE SAME
AREAS REPEATEDLY?



MMM...NOW THAT YOU
MENTION IT, I SEEM TO
RECALL ALL OF MY PATIENTS
BEING AFFECTED IN SIMILAR
WAYS...

WHAT'S THE NUMBER
OF CENTRAL CONTROL ON
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE
PLANET? I WANT TO CHECK
WITH THEM--GET TO THE
BOTTOM OF THIS...



THERE IS NO NUMBER, OLD
MAN, THAT OUTPOST IS
STRICTLY TOP SECRET. YOU'RE
ON YOUR OWN OUT THERE
UNTIL RELIEF ARRIVES IN
TWO WEEKS.

GIVE ME A
FEW DAYS, THOUGH
--I'VE GOT A FRIEND
AT CENTRAL CONTROL,
MAYBE HE CAN FIND
OUT SOMETHING
FOR US. I'LL CALL
YOU...

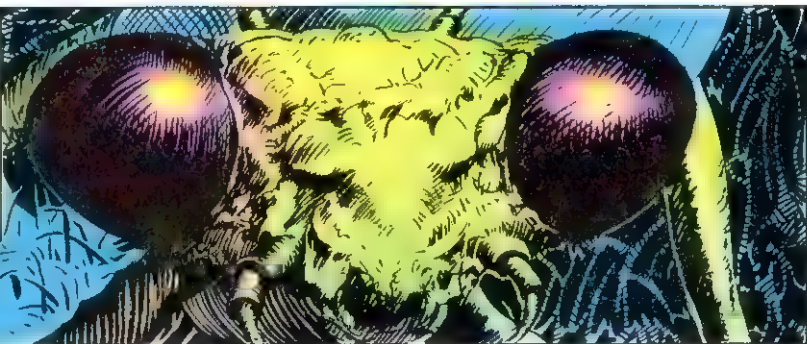
KLETE RESTED QUIETLY ON A LEAFY BOUGH, GENTLY LICKING HIS BACK LEGS WHERE THE FINE SPIDER WEB HAD LEFT A STICKY RESIDUE. NEVER WOULD HE BE SO CARELESS AGAIN. IT HAD NEARLY COST HIM HIS LIFE...



HE SENSED RATHER THAN FELT THE CHANGE IN THE AIR... THE DEEP MUSKY AROMA WASHING OVER HIM FROM THE TREE TOPS... THE GENTLE WHIR OF TISSUE-THIN WINGS THAT THRUMMED OUT OF THE CLOUDS ABOVE...



AND THEN KLETE KNEW. KNEW IT WITH A CERTAINTY THAT SENT HIS HEART CRASHING, HIS MANDIBLES TWITCHING... THAT WHICH HE HAD WAITED FOR ALL THIS DAY--ALL HIS LIFE--WAS COMING... THE ETERNAL MOMENT HAD ARRIVED... HIS DESTINY WAS AT HAND...

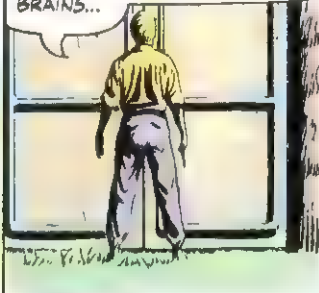


IT'S CRAZY! I'VE CHECKED OVER A DOZEN BLOOD SAMPLES FROM BOTH HEALTHY ALIENS AND LEPROUS CORPSES, AND EACH TIME THEY CHECK OUT IDENTICALLY!

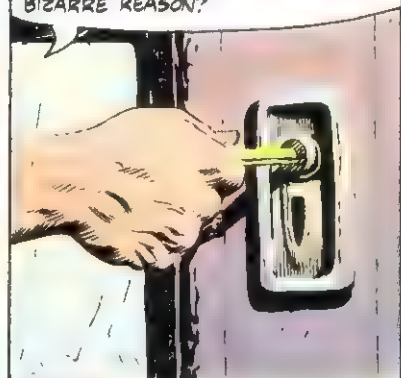


THE LEPROSY IS A HOAX! THIS PLANET IS CLEAN! THERE IS NO DISEASE!

BUT IF NOT A LEPER COMPOUND, THEN WHAT? COULD THE FEDERATION BE HIDING SOME TOP SECRET INSTALLATION HERE? AND WHY ALL THESE CARD-CARRYING, IGNORANT ALIEN NATIVES? THESE POOR BRUTES AREN'T INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO BE USED FOR ANYTHING REQUIRING BRAINS...



...AND WHY THE STEADY STREAM OF MUTILATED BODIES? WHAT IN THE WORLD IS HAPPENING TO THESE CREATURES IN THERE? ARE THEY BEING EXPERIMENTED ON FOR SOME BIZARRE REASON?



ONE SURE WAY TO FIND OUT...



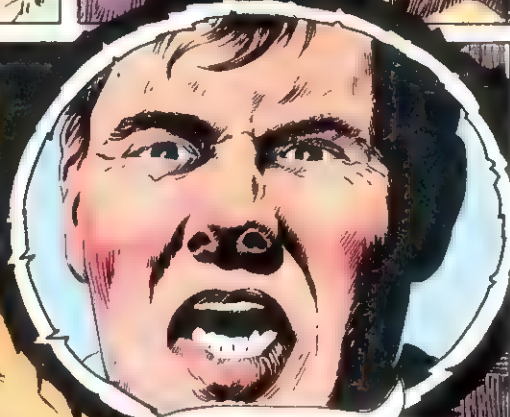


MY GOD!
THIS IS NO
JEPER COLONY!
I'VE NEVER SEEN
ANYTHING SO
BEAUTIFUL...

IT'S LIKE A FAIRY TALE TOWN! THOSE
QUANT LITTLE COTTAGES...SO INVITING...
ALMOST INTOXICATING...AND THAT MUSKY
ODOR, DELICIOUS! IS IT FROM THE FLOWERS?...

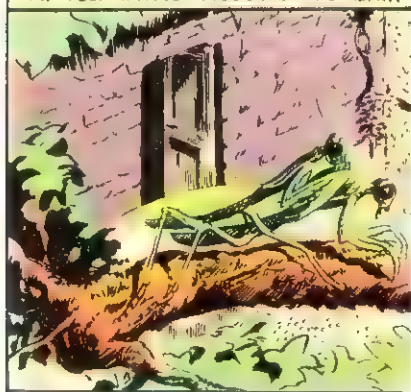


S-SHE'S BEAUTIFUL...ABSOLUTELY
BEAUTIFUL! I-I MUST HAVE HER...
I MUST...C-CAN'T STOP MYSELF!
...M-MUST POSSESS HER!



CLAYBORNE! I'VE
CHECKED WITH MY FRIEND
AT CENTRAL CONTROL--HE HAS
ACCESS TO PRIVILEGED INFORMATION!
CLAYBORNE, THE COMPOUND--IT'S A
BLOODY BREEDING COLONY! IT'S HOW
THOSE CREATURES REPRODUCE! THE
FEDERATION KEEPS IT UNDER CONTROL
SO THE WHOLE BLEEDING POPULATION
DOESN'T DESTROY ITSELF! FOR GOD'S
SAKE, STAY OUT OF THE COMPOUND!
CLAYBORNE, DO YOU HEAR ME?
ARE YOU THERE?

KLETE FELT AS IF HIS WHOLE BODY WOULD
TREMBLE ITSELF APART. WITH A DELI-
BERATION AND IGNORANCE THAT
BEFITTED HIS SPECIES, HE MOUNTED
THE GLEAMING FEMALE BEFORE HIM
AND FELT HIMSELF DISSOLVE INTO HER...

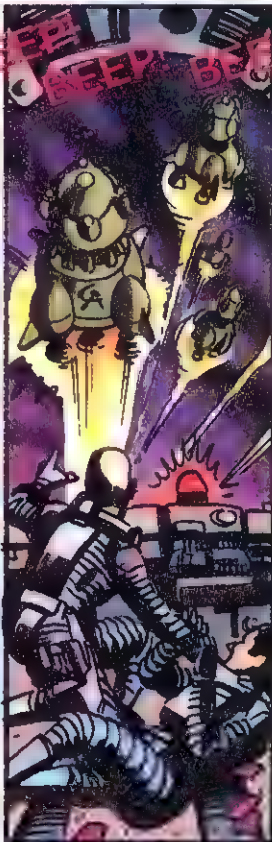


NO MATTER THAT EVEN AS
HE DID SO, THE GREEDY FEMALE
TURNED HER SWIVEL HEAD
AND SANK HER MANDIBLES
INTO HIS EYE, TEARING OUT
GREAT CHUNKS OF THE DELI-
CATE FLESH WITH EVERY
MOUTHFUL...



NO MATTER THAT EVEN AFTER HIS
HEAD AND NECK WERE GONE, HE
CONTINUED TO THRUST EAGERLY
UNTIL BOTH MIND AND BODY WERE SWEEP
AWAY IN A TORRENT OF PASSION AND
BLOOD. FOR KLETE HAD FOUND HIS
ETERNITY...
KLETE HAD BE-
COME IMMORTAL...
THE WAITING
WAS OVER AT
LAST...

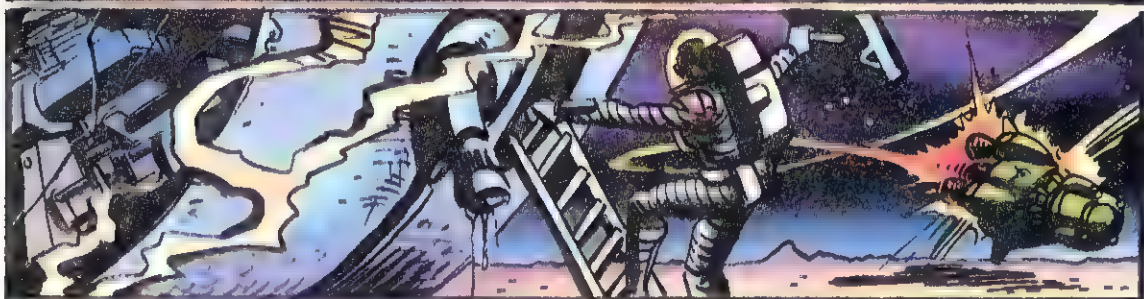
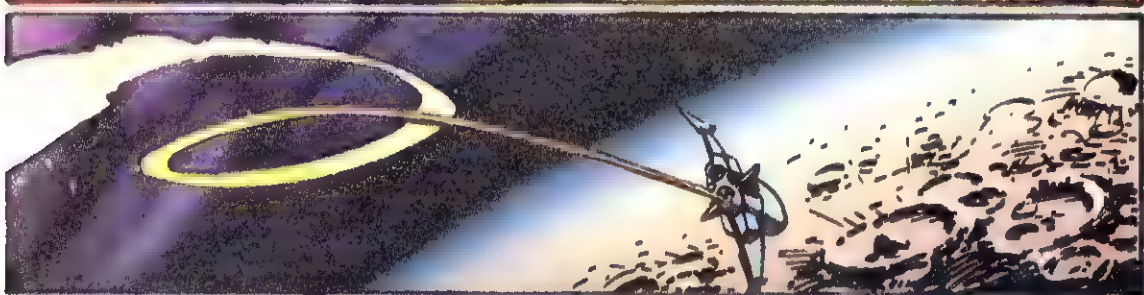
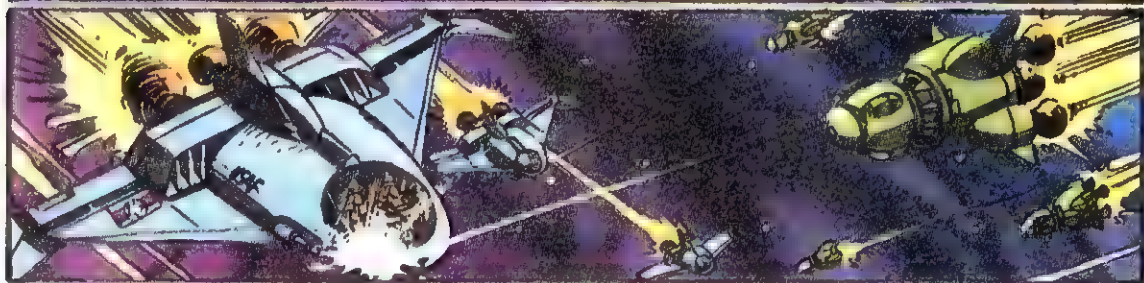
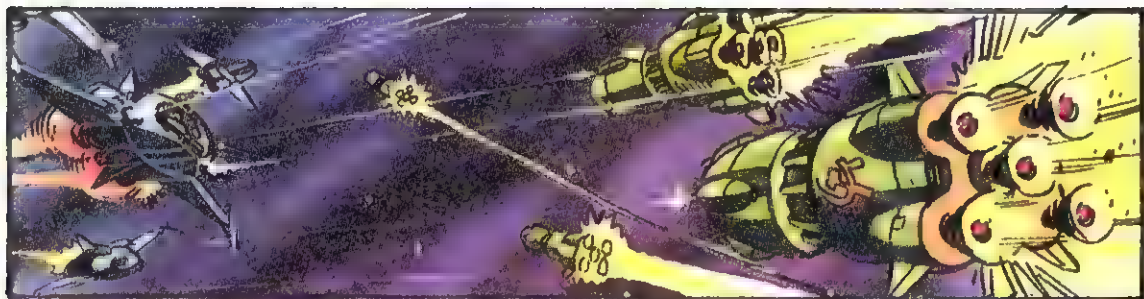


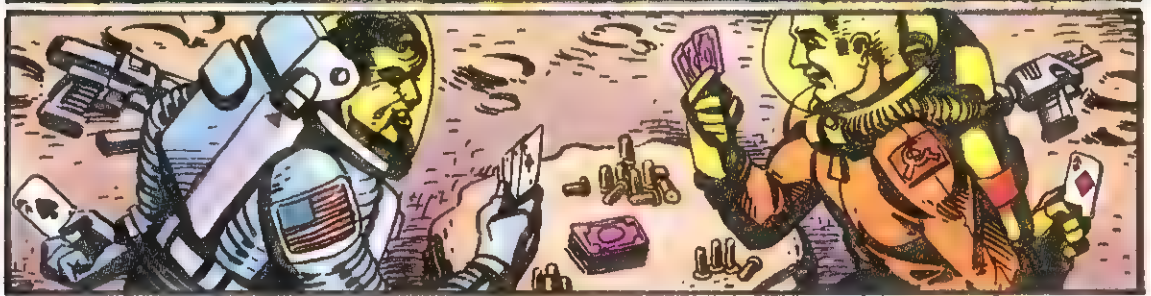
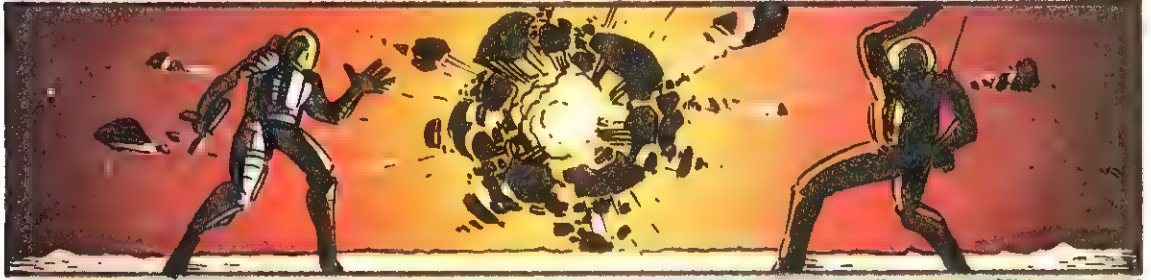
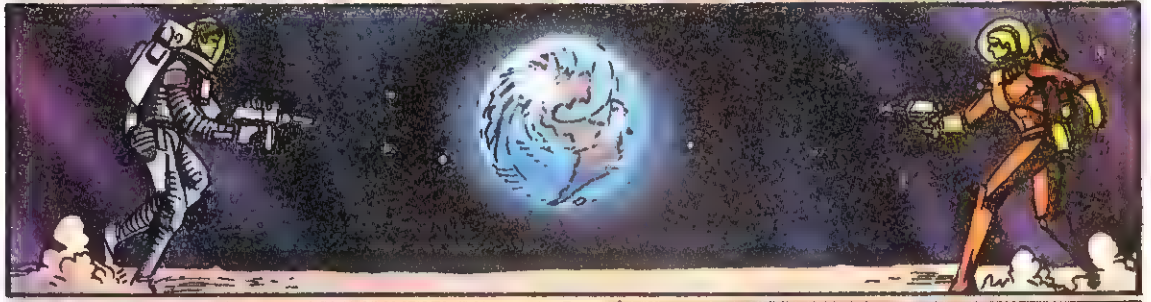
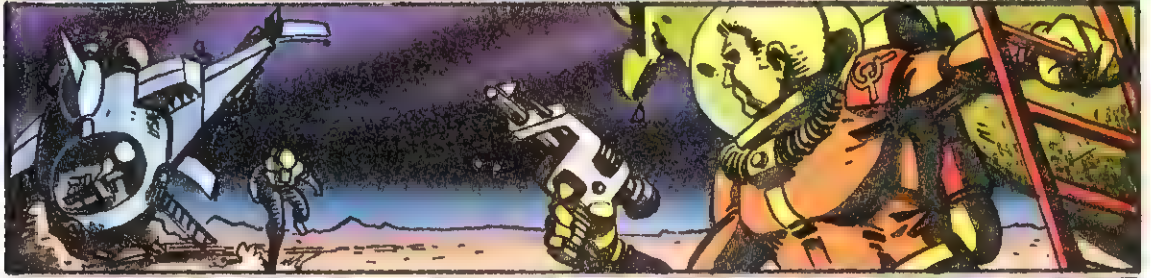
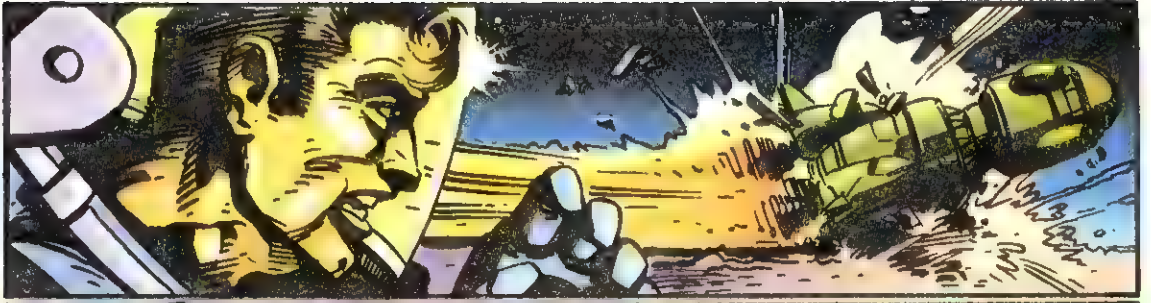


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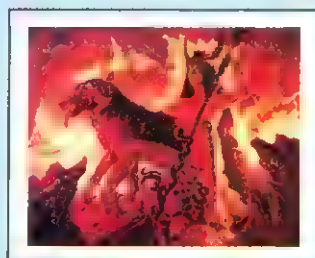
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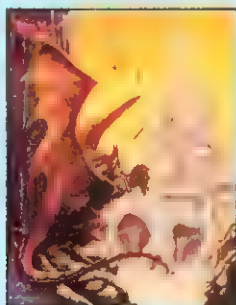


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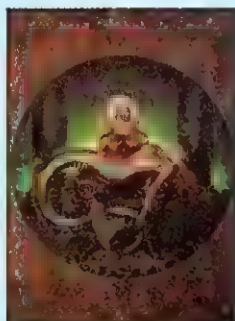


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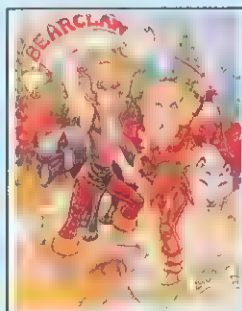
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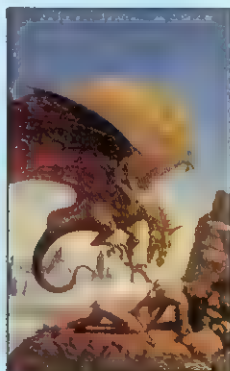
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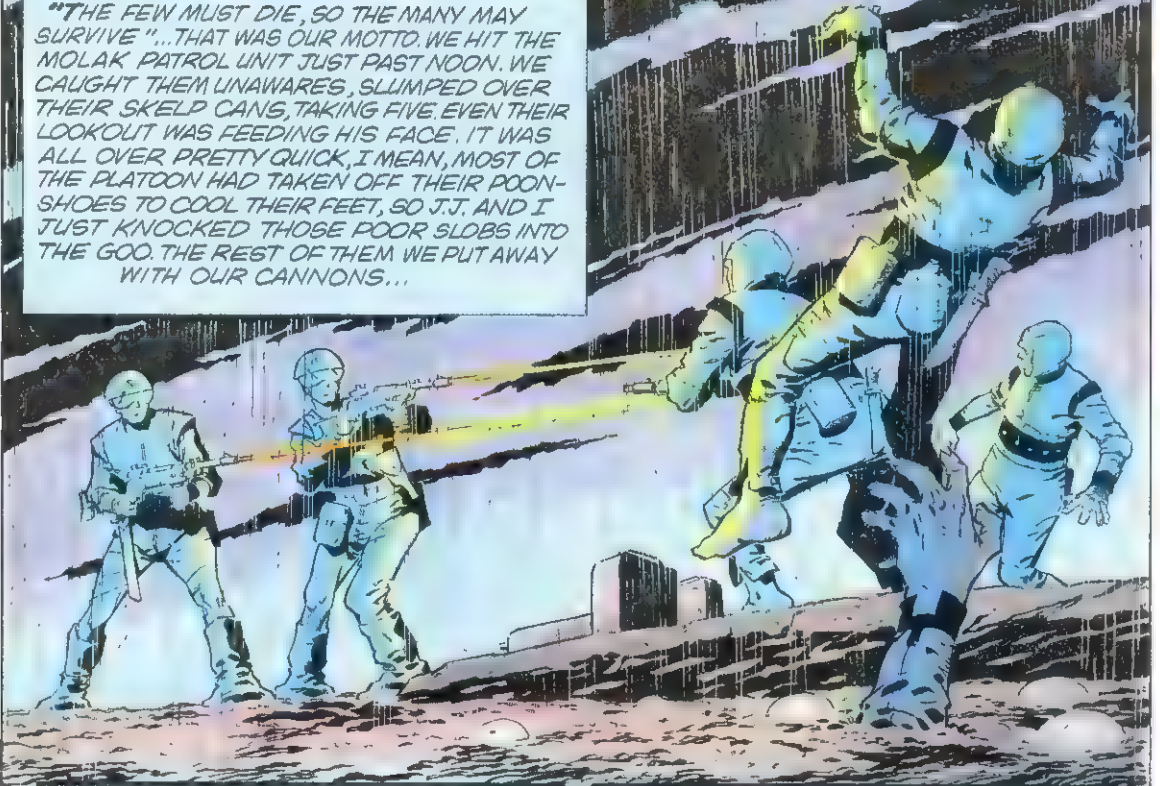
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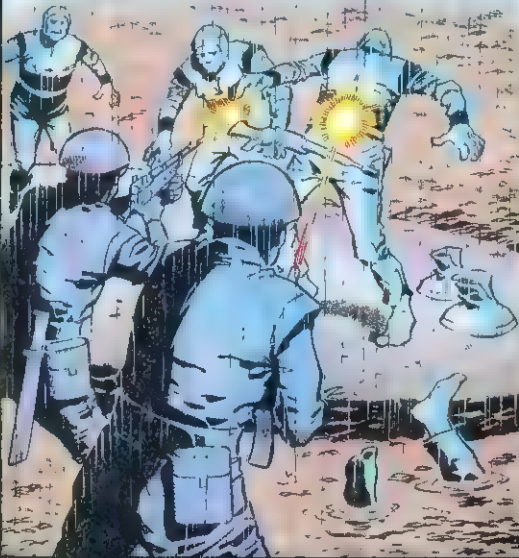
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PLASTIC

"THE FEW MUST DIE, SO THE MANY MAY SURVIVE"...THAT WAS OUR MOTTO. WE HIT THE MOLAK PATROL UNIT JUST PAST NOON. WE CAUGHT THEM UNAWARES, SLUMPED OVER THEIR SKELD CANS, TAKING FIVE. EVEN THEIR LOOKOUT WAS FEEDING HIS FACE. IT WAS ALL OVER PRETTY QUICK, I MEAN, MOST OF THE PLATOON HAD TAKEN OFF THEIR POON-SHOES TO COOL THEIR FEET, SO J.J. AND I JUST KNOCKED THOSE POOR SLOBS INTO THE GOO. THE REST OF THEM WE PUT AWAY WITH OUR CANNONS...

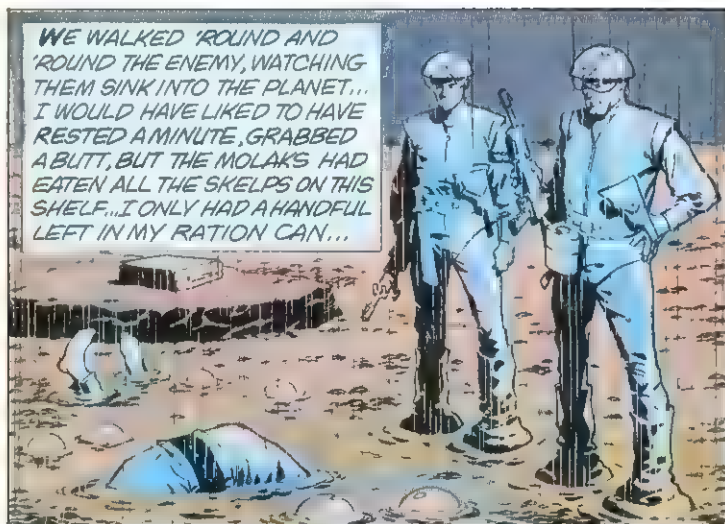


IT HAD BEEN RAINING FOR ABOUT SIX WEEKS STRAIGHT--NOT UNUSUAL FOR THIS PLANET--SO WHEN THE ENEMY HIT THE GOO, HE STUCK FAST AND SUNK FASTER...



I CAUGHT THE LAST OF THEM WITH MY LASER-GIG AND THE SHELF WAS OURS...





WE WALKED 'ROUND AND 'ROUND THE ENEMY, WATCHING THEM SINK INTO THE PLANET... I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HAVE RESTED A MINUTE, GRABBED A BUTT, BUT THE MOLAKS HAD EATEN ALL THE SKELPS ON THIS SHELF... I ONLY HAD A HANDFUL LEFT IN MY RATION CAN...



HOW FAR TO THE NEXT SHELF?

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? YOU DON'T GOT NO CHOICE 'BOUT IT. HAVE SOME SKELP...



I DON'T WANT ANY GODDAM SKELP, ARCH! I WANNA KNOW HOW FAR TO THE NEXT SHELF!

OKAY, OKAY... CHRIST! SIX MILES, OKAY? SIX MILES...



GOD, I'LL NEVER MAKE IT, ARCH...

YOU'LL MAKE IT, J.J....

MY FEET ARE LIKE LEAD WEIGHTS NOW!

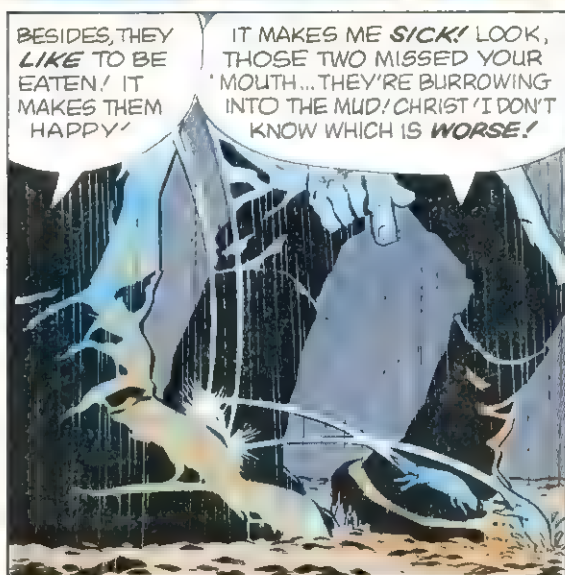
SURE YOU DON'T WANT SOME SKELP?



I UNSCREWED MY PLASTIC RASH-CAN... THE TINY SQUIRMING SKELP LEAPT INTO MY MOUTH...

GOD, HOW DO YOU EAT THOSE THINGS? AGH!

YOU WANT ME TO STARVE OR WHAT?



BESIDES, THEY LIKE TO BE EATEN! IT MAKES THEM HAPPY!

IT MAKES ME SICK! LOOK, THOSE TWO MISSED YOUR MOUTH... THEY'RE BURROWING INTO THE MUD! CHRIST I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS WORSE!



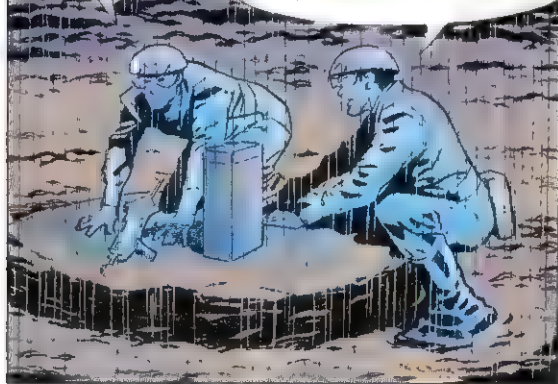
BETTER HAVE SOME-- LONG WAY TO THE NEXT SHELF!

GET THAT SLIMY CRAP AWAY FROM ME!

WE REACHED POINT LOMA AT 0'600...THERE WAS A FRESH SUPPLY OF SKELP WAITING FOR US...

GOD, I'M DEAD...

HMPH! NOT YET YER NOT, SON...HELP ME SET UP THE TENT, I WANNA BUTT, BAD...



PLASTIC'S GOT A HOLE IN IT...

PLASTIC! CHRIST! PLASTIC TENTS, PLASTIC CLOTHES, PLASTIC BOOTS, PLASTIC GUNS...EVEN THE GODDAMN STINKIN', SLIMY, **FOOD** TASTES LIKE PLASTIC! THE WHOLE STINKIN' **WORLD** IS PLASTIC--PLASTIC AND **MUD!**



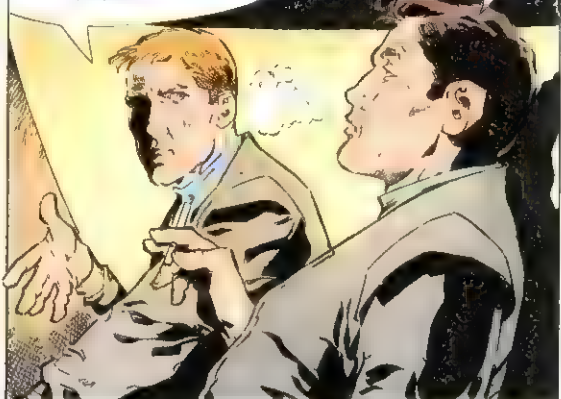
YOU KNOW WHAT THAT BUTT YER SMOKIN' IS MADE OF, ARCH? **PLASTIC!** THAT'S RIGHT! PLASTIC FIBERS WOVEN THROUGH TOBACCO! AND THEY MAKE 'EM FROM SKELP HIDES! YEAH, THOSE LITTLE ANIMALS YOU LIKE SO MUCH!

THEY HAVE TO PUT PLASTIC IN 'EM TO KEEP 'EM DRY--GOVERNMENT ISSUE.



AND OUR GUNS, OUR CLOTHING--AIN'T EVEN **REAL** PLASTIC, IT'S ALL FROM SKELP HIDES!

YOU GRAB SOME SHUT-EYE, I'LL STAND WATCH!

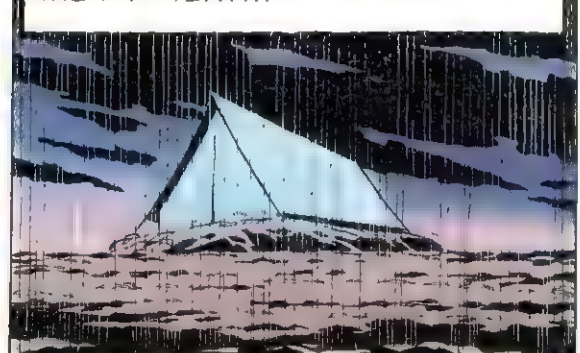


...TRUDGE AND FIGHT...TRUDGE AND FIGHT... ON TO THE NEXT LITTLE SHELF, THEN TRUDGE AND FIGHT SOME MORE...

...(SIGH) AND IF YOU CLIMB ON ENOUGH SHELVES, THEY GIVE YOU A BADGE...JEEZ...



POOR JIMMY JOE...BATTLE FATIGUE. I SCOOPED OUT A HANDFUL OF FRESH SKELP FROM THE GOVERNMENT CONTAINER AND LET THEM JUMP INTO MY MOUTH. ONE OF THEM FELL DOWN MY CHIN, HIT THE SHELF AND SCAMPERED INTO THE MUD OUTSIDE THE PUP TENT...



THE ENEMY HIT US ABOUT
TWILIGHT...



MY RIFLE! OH, CHRIST,
MY RIFLE!



NEVER MIND YOUR GUN! GRAB
YOUR CELLO-TORCH!



THAT WAS THE FIRST AND LAST TIME
I EVER SAW JIMMY JOE GO NUTS...

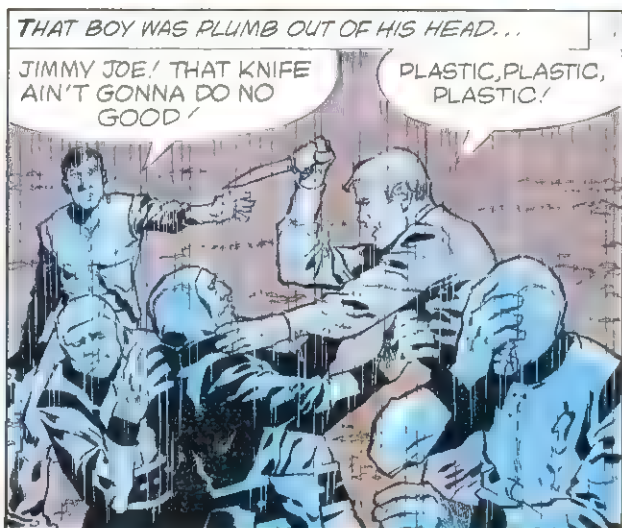


YAGGGGGGHHHH!

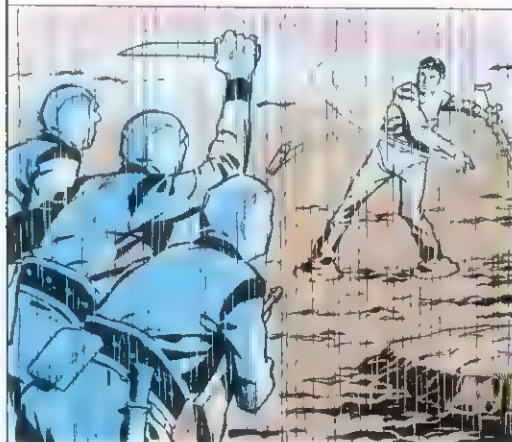
THAT BOY WAS PLUMB OUT OF HIS HEAD...

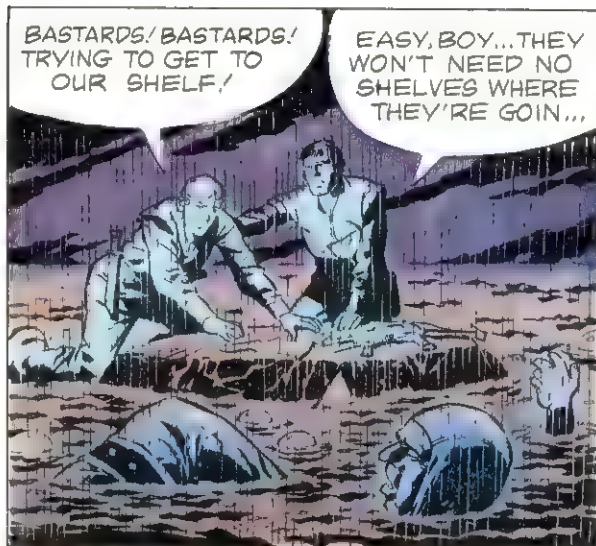
JIMMY JOE! THAT KNIFE
AIN'T GONNA DO NO
GOOD!

PLASTIC, PLASTIC,
PLASTIC!



I WORKED A PLASTIC BOMB LOOSE
FROM MY BELT AND FLUNG IT AT THE
CENTER OF THE SWIRLING MASS OF BODIES...





BASTARDS! BASTARDS!
TRYING TO GET TO
OUR SHELF!

EASY, BOY...THEY
WON'T NEED NO
SHELVES WHERE
THEY'RE GOIN'...



(SOB-SOB) OUR TENT,
ARCH! IT'S RUINED!
WE GOT NO WAY TO
GET OUT OF THE
RAIN NOW!

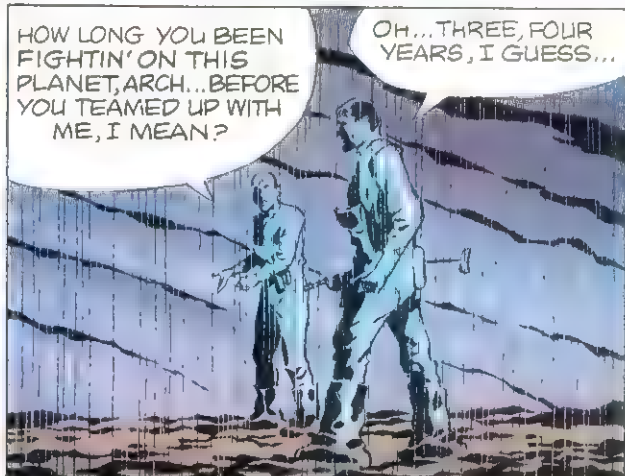
IT'S ONLY ANOTHER
HUNDRED MILES TO
THE NEXT **CO**
STATION... WE CAN
GET A NEW TENT
THERE...



I DON'T *WANT* TO GO TO
THE GODDAMN **CO** STATION!
I WANNA STAY *HERE!*
I WANNA BE DRY!
*I WANNA
BE DRY!*

EASY,
KID!

*WE SET OUT FOR THE NEXT SHELF AT 0:920...I
DIDN'T LIKE THE WAY JIMMY JOE WAS ACTIN'...*



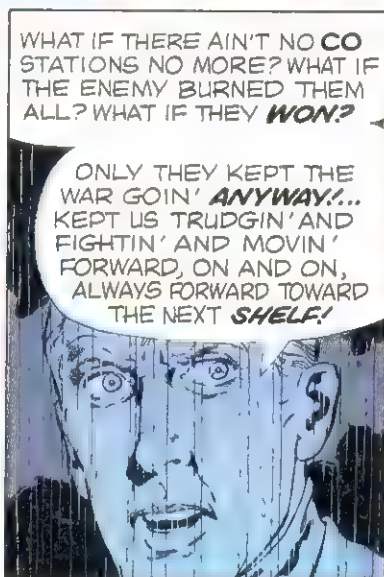
HOW LONG YOU BEEN
FIGHTIN' ON THIS
PLANET, ARCH...BEFORE
YOU TEAMED UP WITH
ME, I MEAN?

OH...THREE, FOUR
YEARS, I GUESS...



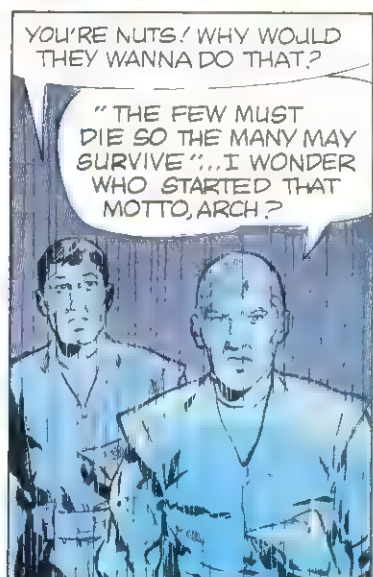
AND HOW LONG SINCE YOU
SEEN A **CO** STATION?HOW
LONG SINCE YOU SEEN
ANYTHING EXCEPT MUD
AND SHELVES, SHELVES
AND MUD?

WHAT'RE YOU
DRIVIN' AT, BOY?



WHAT IF THERE AIN'T NO **CO**
STATIONS NO MORE?WHAT IF
THE ENEMY BURNED THEM
ALL? WHAT IF THEY *WON*?

ONLY THEY KEPT THE
WAR GOIN' *ANYWAY...*
KEPT US TRUDGIN' AND
FIGHTIN' AND MOVIN'
FORWARD, ON AND ON,
ALWAYS FORWARD TOWARD
THE NEXT **SHELF!**



YOU'RE NUTS! WHY WOULD
THEY WANNA DO THAT?

"THE FEW MUST
DIE SO THE MANY MAY
SURVIVE"...I WONDER
WHO STARTED THAT
MOTTO, ARCH?

WE RAN INTO A SMALL PATROL LATER THAT NIGHT. THEY WEREN'T NO REAL PROBLEM, BUT OLD JIMMY JOE WASN'T ALL THAT MUCH HELP EITHER...



I THOUGHT FOR A WHILE THERE HE WASN'T GOING TO MAKE IT TO THE NEXT SHELF...

YOU OKAY, JIMMY JOE?..

...TIRED...TIRED...



WE WERE EXHAUSTED. DESPITE THE HEAVY RAIN AND NO PROTECTION, I NODDED RIGHT OFF...



WHEN I WOKE UP...JIMMY JOE WAS GONE...

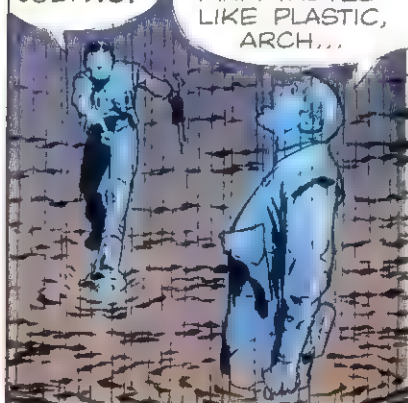
JIMMY JOE? WHERE ARE YA? JIMMY JOE?



I FOUND HIM A FEW MINUTES LATER...BUT OF COURSE IT WAS TOO LATE...HE'D STOOD STILL TOO LONG, JUST STARIN' UP AT THE FALLIN' RAIN WITH HIS MOUTH OPEN...

JIMMY JOE! NO!

...PLASTIC (HEH-HEH) ...RAIN TASTES LIKE PLASTIC, ARCH...



WHY, JIMMY JOE? WHY??

...(HEH-HEH) FIGURED IT OUT LAST NIGHT, ARCH (HEH-HEH) AIN'T NO SENSE IN WAITIN'... CAN'T BEAT 'EM (HEH-HEH) MAY AS WELL JOIN 'EM!...



THERE WAS NUTHIN' I COULD DO...IF YOU STAND STILL FOR MORE THAN TEN SECONDS IN THAT STUFF, YOU'RE GONE FOR GOOD...IT'S LIKE QUICKSAND...

JIMMY JOE...

...THEY **WON**, ARCH (HEH-HEH) RIGHT UNDER OUR NOSES!

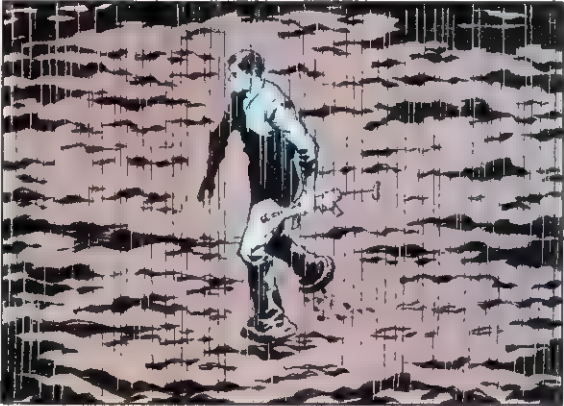




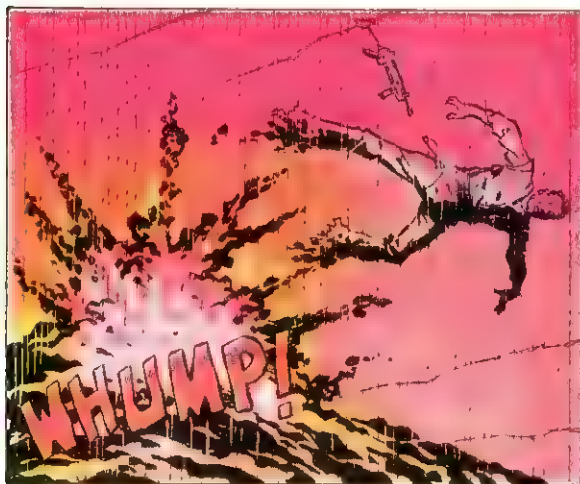
I STOOD THERE FOR A LONG TIME AFTER JIMMY JOE'S HEAD HAD GONE UNDER. HE WAS PRETTY FAR-OUT THERE AT THE LAST, BUT SOMETHING ABOUT HIS WORDS CHILLED ME.

IT HAD BEEN MONTHS SINCE I'D SEEN A CO STATION... WHERE HAD THEY ALL GONE? AND IF THERE WEREN'T ANY MORE CO'S, WHERE WERE ALL THOSE FRESH SUPPLIES OF SKELP COMIN' FROM--THE ENEMY?

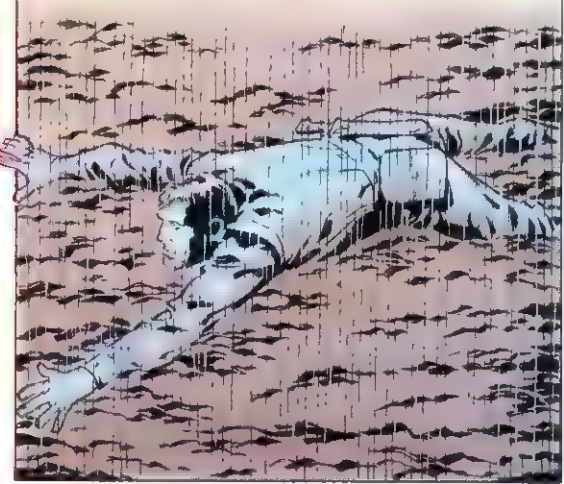
SOMETHIN' WAS WEIRD ALL RIGHT... BUT I DIDN'T GET THE CHANCE TO THINK ABOUT IT ANYMORE...



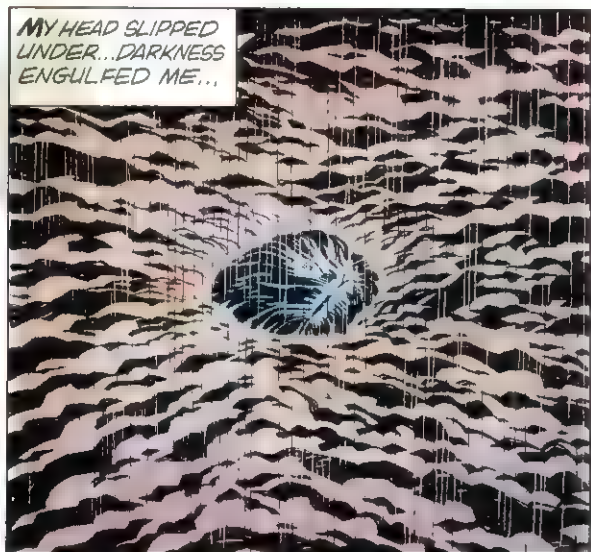
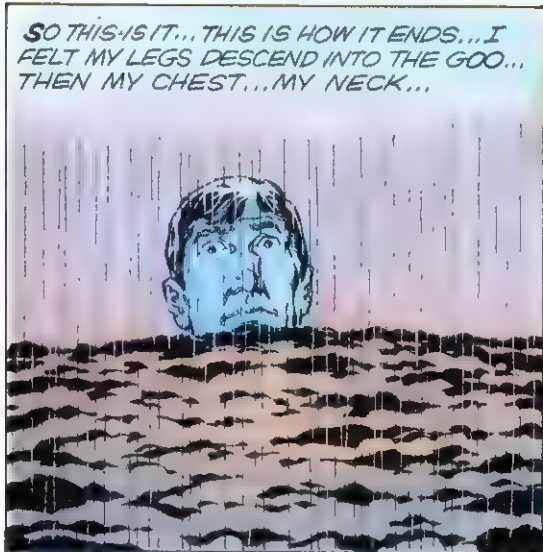
CAUGHT OFF GUARD. THE BASTARDS. MY POON SHOES WERE SHREDED... I BEGAN TO SINK...



SO THIS IS IT... THIS IS HOW IT ENDS... I FELT MY LEGS DESCEND INTO THE GOO... THEN MY CHEST... MY NECK...



MY HEAD SLIPPED UNDER... DARKNESS ENGULFED ME...



BUT NOT COMPLETE DARKNESS.
I OPENED MY EYES... A BROWNISH
BLUR SURROUNDED ME...
I COULDN'T HOLD MY BREATH
ANY LONGER... I FILLED MY LUNGS--



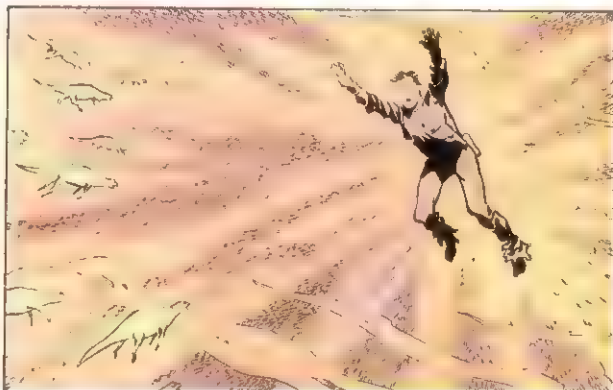
--WITH AIR! I COULD
BREATHE! IT WAS LIKE
SINKING INTO A WARM BATH!
SOOTHING, RELAXING... AND
BEST OF ALL, NO RAIN! A
TINY SHAPE SLITHERED
PAST MY FACE...



A SKELP! LIVING IN THE MUD!
I REACHED OUT MY HAND TO
GRAB HIM, BUT HE SLITHERED
AWAY HAUNTILY. STRANGE...
SKELPS LOVE TO BE EATEN. I
ROLLED OVER LAZILY IN THE
THICK GOO... MORE SKELPS
SURROUNDED ME...

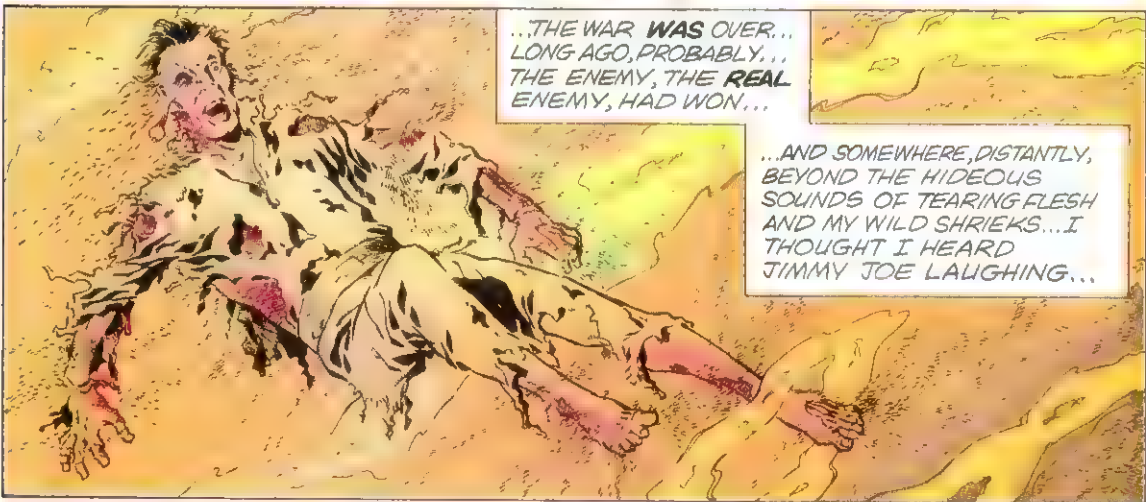


THEY WERE EVERYWHERE 'THOUSANDS OF THEM 'MILLIONS' ALL STARING AT ME AS I SANK...
STARING......AND THEN SUDDENLY, CERTAINLY, I KNEW... SECONDS BEFORE IT HAPPENED, I KNEW...
I UNDERSTOOD THE MEANING OF THE PHRASE: "THE FEW MUST DIE SO THE MANY MAY SURVIVE"...
I UNDERSTOOD AND I SCREAMED
AS THE SKELPS ATTACKED...



...THE WAR **WAS** OVER...
LONG AGO, PROBABLY...
THE ENEMY, THE **REAL**
ENEMY, HAD WON...

...AND SOMEWHERE, DISTANTLY,
BEYOND THE HIDEOUS
SOUNDS OF TEARING FLESH
AND MY WILD SHRIEKS... I
THOUGHT I HEARD
JIMMY JOE LAUGHING...

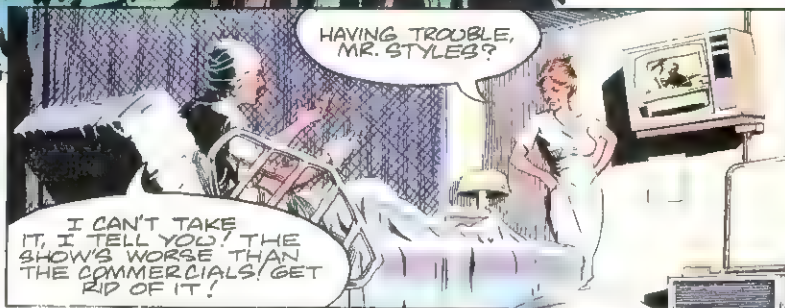


WASTELAND

FIRST THEY HAD FOUND HIM, STRETCHED OUT THERE UNDER THE BROILING SUN, STILL AS DEATH. THEN THEY HAD DUMPED WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIM IN AN AIR FORCE HELICOPTER (FORTUNATELY STATIONED NEARBY) AND AIR LIFTED HIM HERE TO FLAGSTAFF MEMORIAL. THEN THEY HAD STRETCHED HIM OUT AGAIN, PLUNGED NEEDLES INTO HIS VEINS, PUMPED HIM FULL OF ANTI-TOXIN, RUN TESTS, PLUNGED MORE NEEDLES, RUN MORE TESTS, PULLED HIM IN AND OUT OF COMA, RUN YET MORE TESTS, AND THEN ... THEY HAD PROPPED HIM UP IN BED AND SUBJECTED HIM TO THE WORST TORTURE OF ALL...



ARGGGH!
I CAN'T
STAND
ANYMORE!



HAVING TROUBLE,
MR. STYLES?

I CAN'T TAKE
IT, I TELL YOU! THE
SHOW'S WORSE THAN
THE COMMERCIALS! GET
RID OF IT!

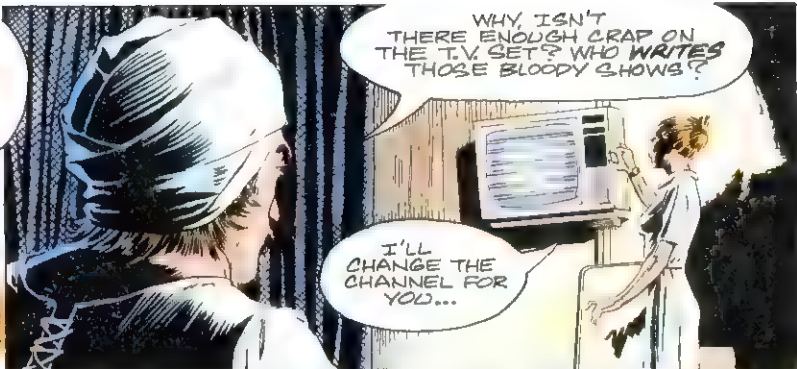
THAT'S "ONE LIFE...
ONE LOVE," MR. STYLES.
ALL THE PATIENTS LOVE
IT. IT'S A C-WING
FAVORITE...

IT
SOCKS. WHEN
DO I GET OUTTA
HERE, NURSE
BREAST?

SCRIPT: BRUCE JONES ART: TOM YEATES
Lettering: Timothy Harkins Color: Joe Chiodo

T. YEATES

THE NAME IS
BRAST, MR. STYLES, AS
I'VE TOLD YOU MANY TIMES,
AND YOU'LL BE RELEASED AS
SOON AS DR. WILLIS IS SURE
YOU'RE FREE OF DELIRIUM.
HAVE YOU HAD YOUR **BM**
YET THIS MORNING?



WHY, ISN'T
THERE ENOUGH CRAP ON
THE T.V. SET? WHO **WRITES**
THOSE BLOODY SHOWS?

I'LL
CHANGE THE
CHANNEL FOR
YOU...



AGHH!
LIZARDS! REPTILES!
GET RID OF IT! I
HATE LIZARDS!
I HATE 'EM!

GOODNESS! SUCH
HISTRIONICS! QUIET DOWN,
YOU'LL WAKE THE OTHER
PATIENTS!



YOU KNOW **WHY**
I HATE LIZARDS, NURSE
BREAST?

PROBABLY
BECAUSE THAT'S
WHAT GOT YOU IN
HERE. A GILA
MONSTER WASN'T IT?

...THE
GRANDDADDY
OF ALL GILA
MONSTERS!



I'D BEEN
WORKIN' MESQUAL MESA.
SEE, JUST SOUTH OF OPOSSUM
BEND, I COULD **SMELL** THE
GOLD UNDER MY BOOT
HEELS. THIS TIME I'D
FOUND IT!

I REACHED
BACK, SEE... NOT
LOOKIN', GRABBIN'
AT MY PICK AND
SHOVEL--

"-- AND THE
NEXT THING
I KNOW..."

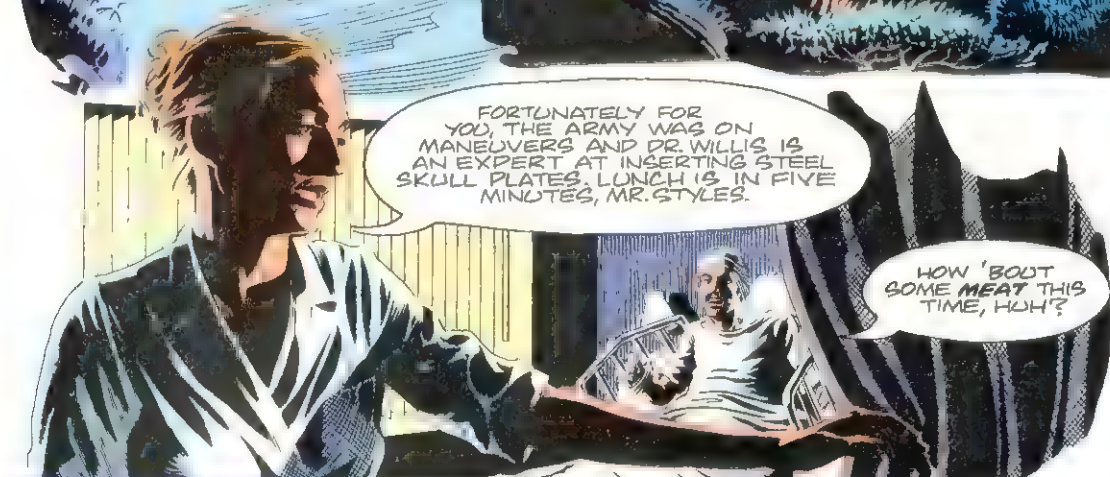


'YAGGI!
JUMPIN'
JESUS!



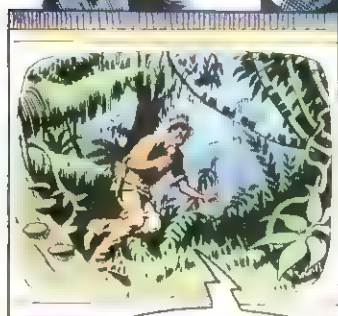
"HELL I DON'T REMEMBER GOIN' OVER THE EDGE... ALL I COULD SEE WAS THAT LIZARD'S RED EYES STARIN' INTO MINE..."

"... THAT AND THE SIGHT OF PART OF MY BRAINS OOZIN' OVER THE ROCKS AT THE BOTTOM OF THAT CANYON..."



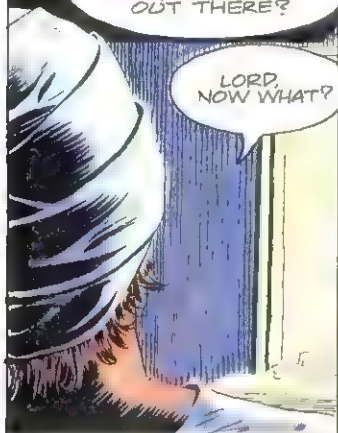
FORTUNATELY FOR YOU, THE ARMY WAS ON MANEUVERS AND DR. WILLIS IS AN EXPERT AT INSERTING STEEL SKULL PLATES. LUNCH IS IN FIVE MINUTES, MR. STYLES.

HOW 'BOUT SOME MEAT THIS TIME, HUH?



HEY! HEY, CAN ANYBODY HEAR ME? IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?

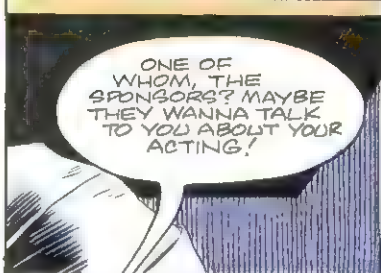
LORD, NOW WHAT?



VANCE? JACKSON? CAN YOU HEAR ME? I-I GOT CUT AWAY SOMEHOW FROM THE PARTY? LISTEN --I-I THINK ONE OF THEM IS AFTER ME!

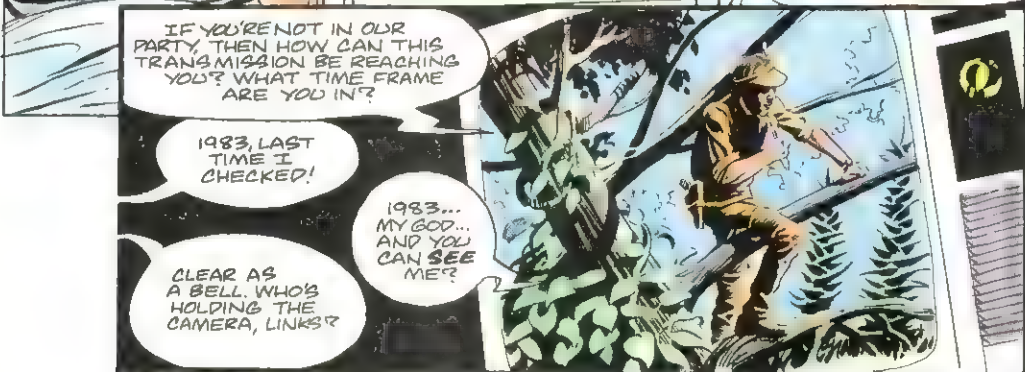
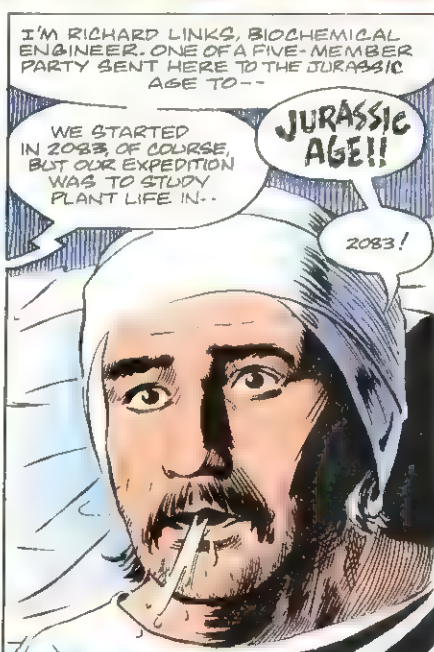
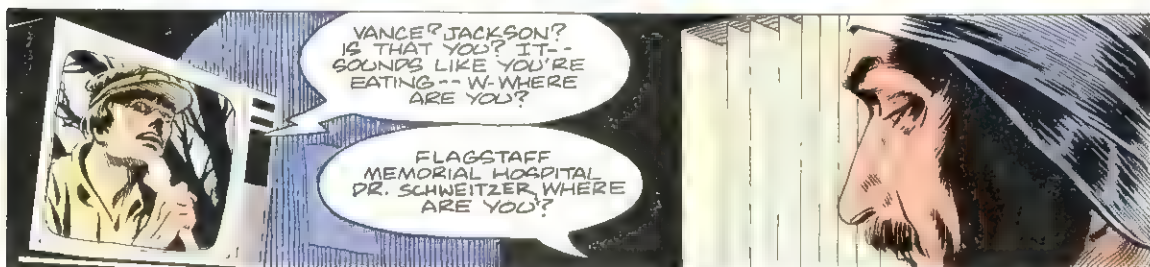
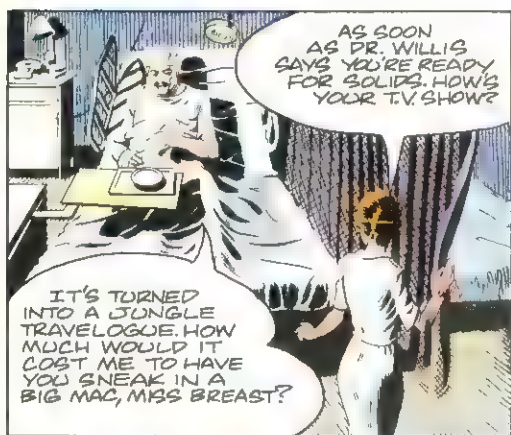


ONE OF WHOM, THE SPONSORS? MAYBE THEY WANNA TALK TO YOU ABOUT YOUR ACTING?



DINNER IS SERVED... NICE HOT GRUEL!

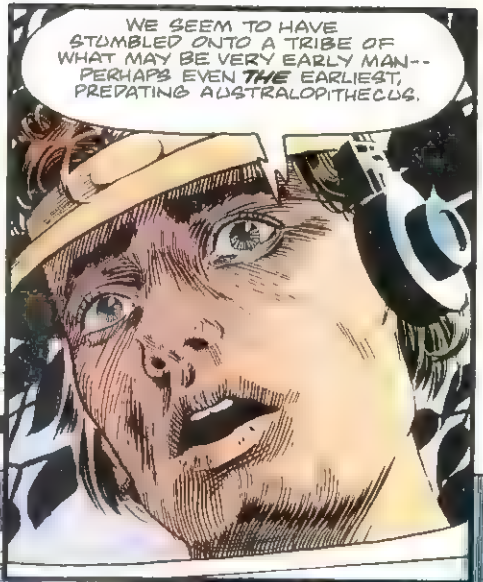
OH, CHRIST, NOT THAT STUFF AGAIN! I'D RATHER EAT PICKLED RAT MEAT THAN THAT STUFF! WHEN DO I GET SOMETHING I CAN SINK MY TEETH INTO?





MY ROBO-FLOAT
IT FOLLOWS ME
EVERYWHERE, LIKE A
MAGNET. WE GOT
SEPARATED FROM
THE MAIN PARTY,
THOUGH, AND I...
I'M AFRAID I'M
BEING TRACKED!

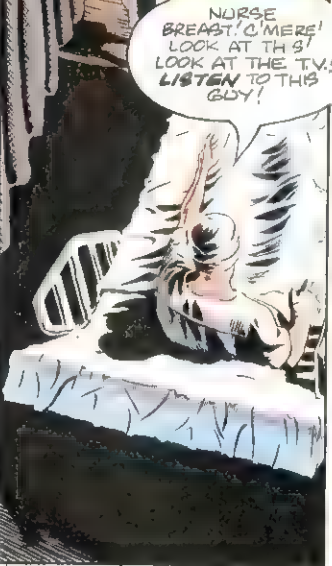
YOU
MENTIONED THAT.
BY WHOM, BY WHAT?



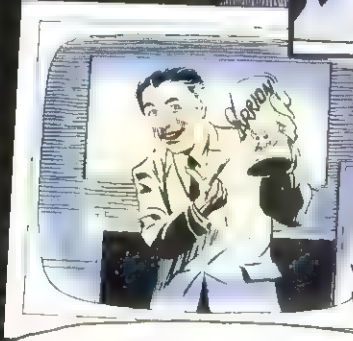
WE SEEM TO HAVE
STUMBLED ONTO A TRIBE OF
WHAT MAY BE VERY EARLY MAN--
PERHAPS EVEN *THE* EARLIEST,
PREVATING AUSTRALOPITHECUS.



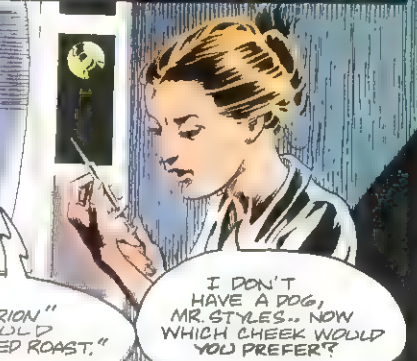
TIME
FOR YOUR
BOOSTER, MR.
STYLES!



NURSE
BREAST! O'MERE!
LOOK AT TH'S!
LOOK AT THE TV!
LISTEN TO THIS
GUY!



"... AND YOUR DOG
WILL WOOLF DOWN NEW "CARRION"
DOG FOOD THE WAY YOU WOULD
WOOLF DOWN A SLAB OF RARE, RED ROAST."



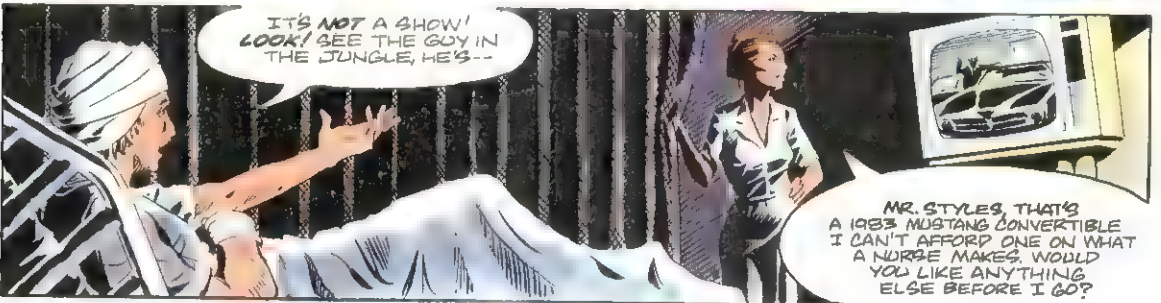
I DON'T
HAVE A DOG,
MR. STYLES.. NOW
WHICH CHEEK WOULD
YOU PREFER?



DOG?
WHAT'RE
YOU--

HEY, WAIT
A MINUTE, THERE'S
A GUY IN TROUBLE
AND--OWW!

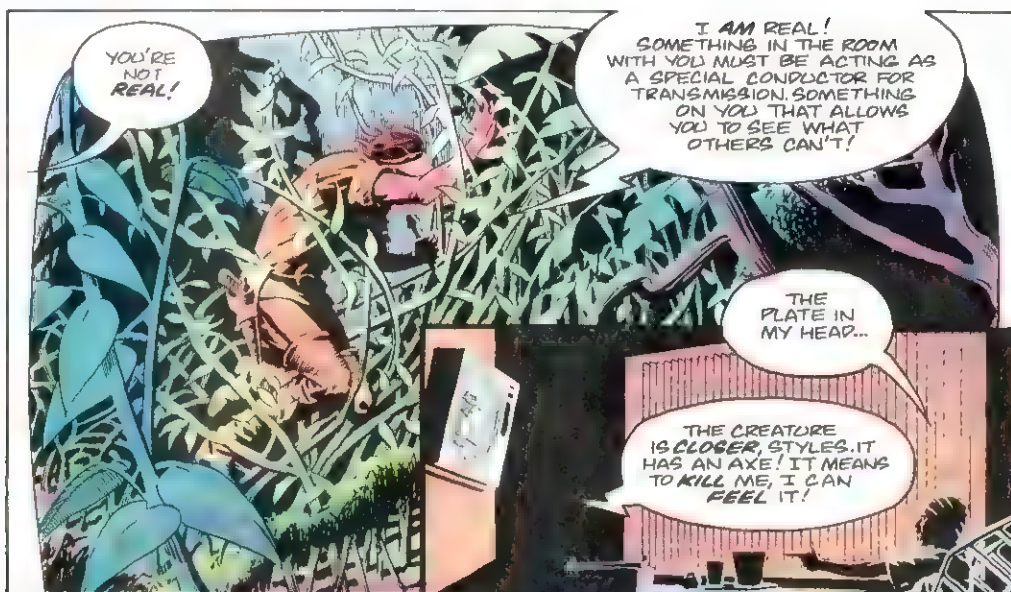
I THOUGHT
YOU HATED
THAT
SHOW, MR
STYLES...



IT'S NOT A SHOW!
LOOK! SEE THE GUY IN
THE JUNGLE, HE'S--

MR. STYLES, THAT'S
A 1983 MUSTANG CONVERTIBLE
I CAN'T AFFORD ONE ON WHAT
A NURSE MAKES. WOULD
YOU LIKE ANYTHING
ELSE BEFORE I GO?





YOU'RE
NOT
REAL!

I AM REAL!
SOMETHING IN THE ROOM
WITH YOU MUST BE ACTING AS
A SPECIAL CONDUCTOR FOR
TRANSMISSION. SOMETHING
ON YOU THAT ALLOWS
YOU TO SEE WHAT
OTHERS CAN'T!

THE
PLATE IN
MY HEAD...

THE CREATURE
IS CLOSER, STYLES. IT
HAS AN AXE! IT MEANS
TO KILL ME, I CAN
FEEL IT!

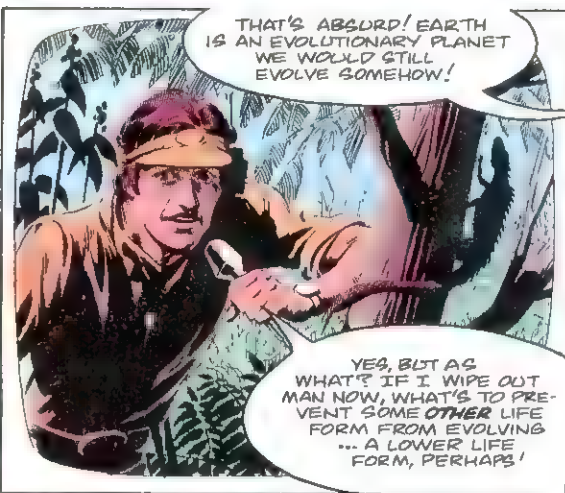
SOUSE
THE GUN!

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! IF I KILL THE CREATURE, OR EVEN INJURE IT, I COULD UPSET THE ENTIRE BALANCE OF TIME FOR CENTURIES TO COME! THIS CREATURE COULD BE THE ORIGINAL ANCESTOR OF MAN! I COULD BE DESTROYING MYSELF -- ALL OF US!



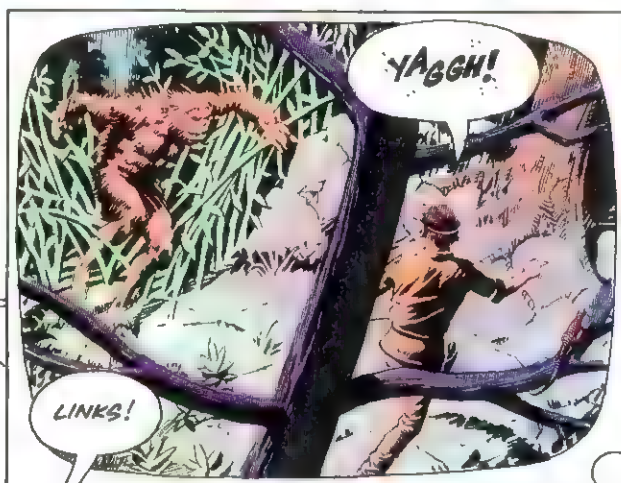
THAT'S ABSURD! EARTH
IS AN EVOLUTIONARY PLANET
WE WOULD STILL
EVOLVE SOMEHOW!

YES, BUT AS
WHAT? IF I WIPE OUT
MAN NOW, WHAT'S TO PRE-
VENT SOME OTHER LIFE
FORM FROM EVOLVING
... A LOWER LIFE
FORM, PERHAPS!



H-HOW CAN
I HELP? I'M HERE
... YOU'RE THERE!

GET THEM
TO OPERATE, STYLES.
ON YOUR HEAD! PERHAPS
THEY CAN FIND A WAY
TO BEND THE
TRANSMISSION
BACK TO--



YAGGH!

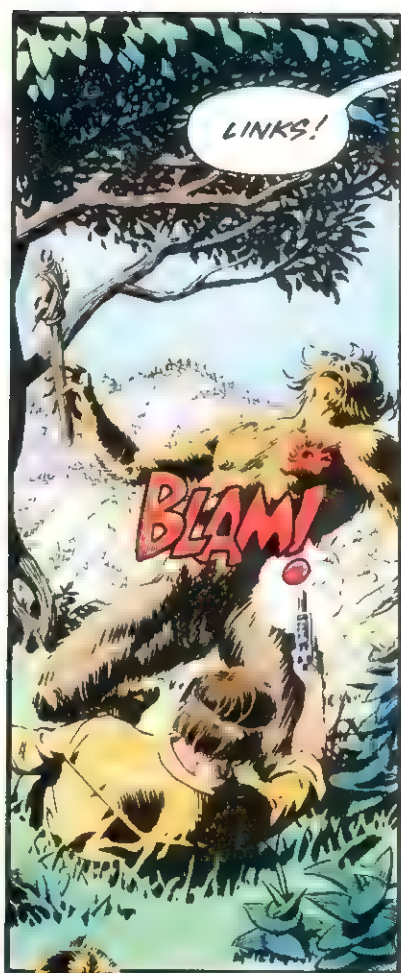
LINKS!



STYLES!
(CHOKE!)

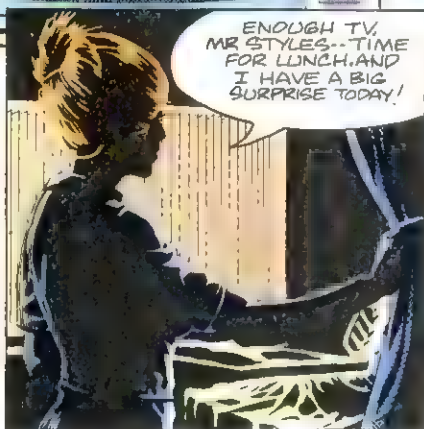
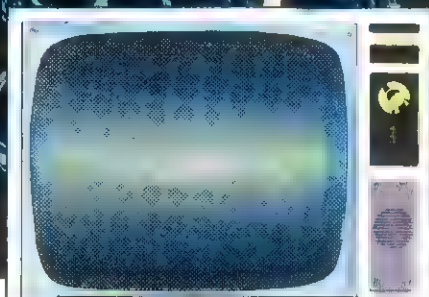


NOT
THE GUN,
LINKS---
DON'T USE
THE GUN!



LINKS!

BLAM!



ENOUGH TV,
MR STYLES--TIME
FOR LUNCH, AND
I HAVE A BIG
SURPRISE TODAY!



-- SOME
NICE PLUMP
PICKLED RATS!



WELL AT LAST!
SOMETHING I CAN GINK
MY FANGS INTO!

Somerset Holmes

ISSUE No.2

Somerset finds a friend . . .
but can she trust him
to help her flee her
pursuers . . . ?

"STRANGERS ON A TRAIN"

Don't
Miss
It!

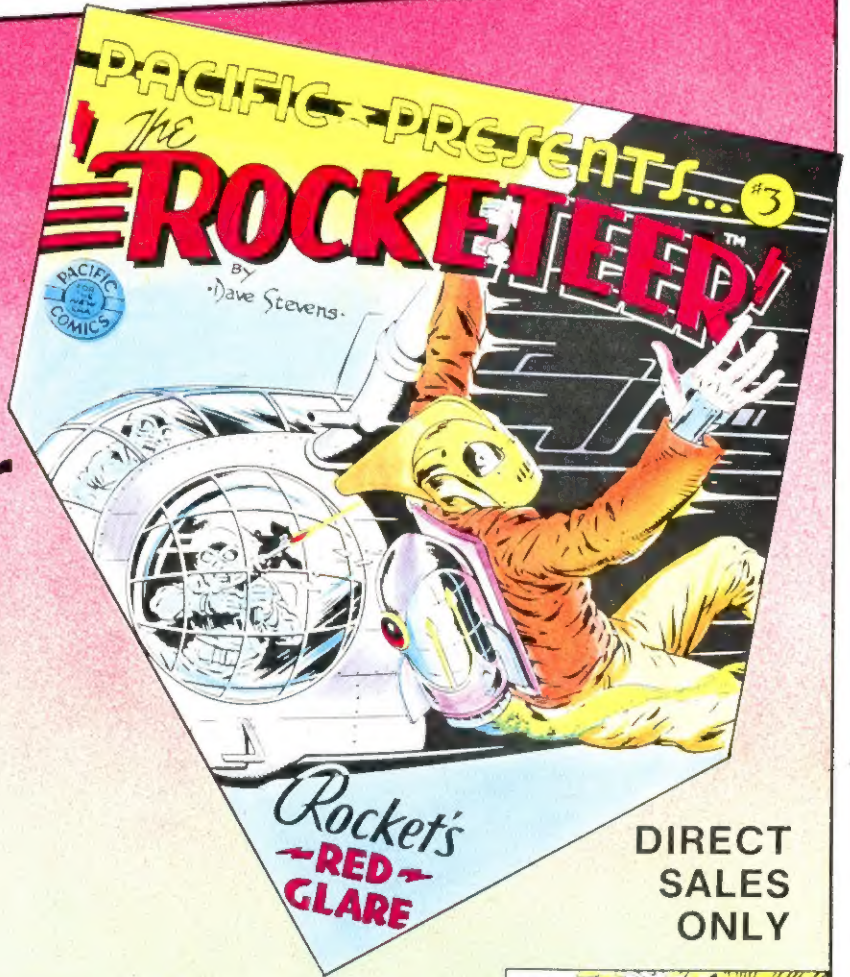
ON SALE NOW!



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comic
book
store!





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SUN RUNNERS



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broderick

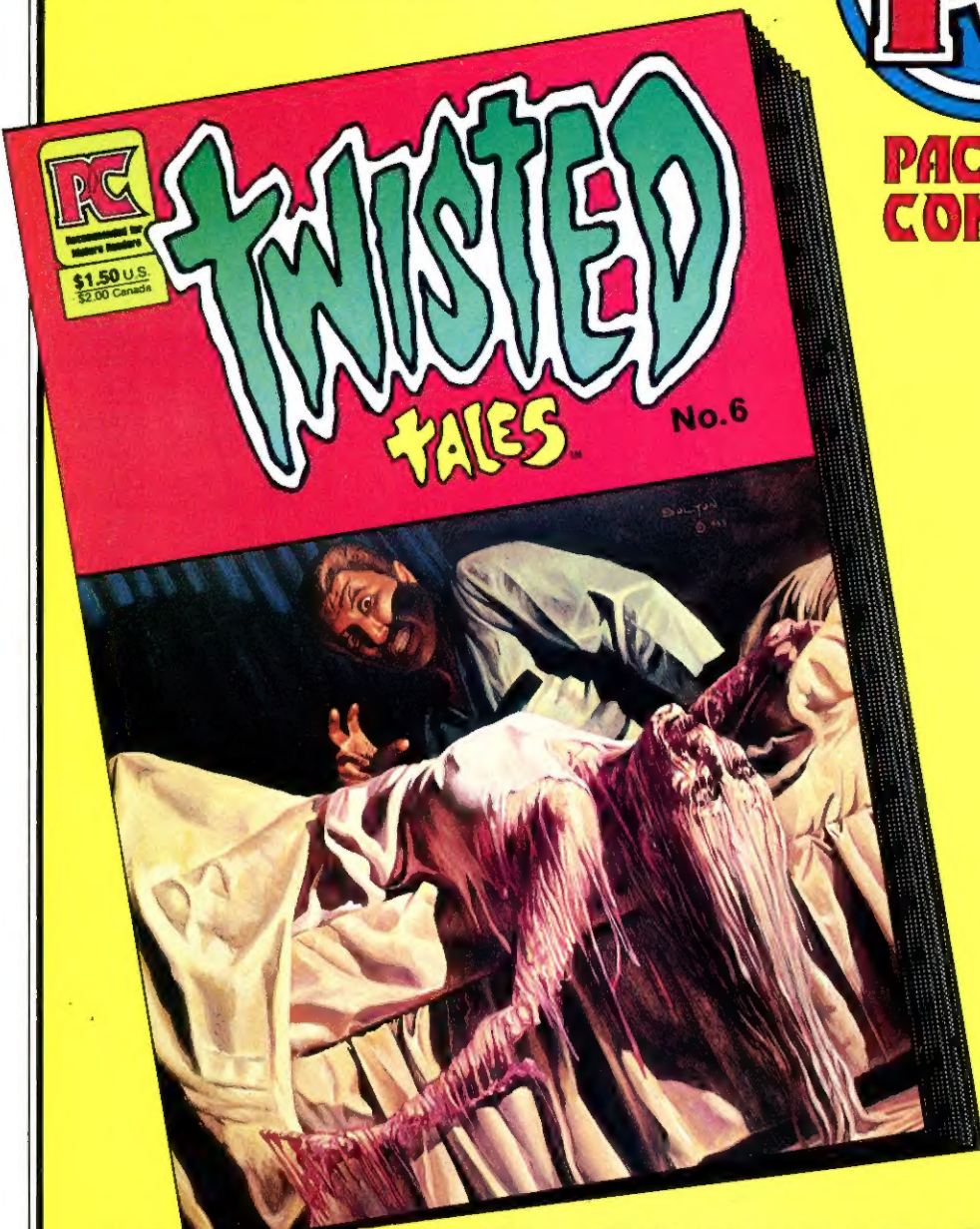
DAVID SCROGGY, EDITOR.

PACIFIC. TOMORROW IS HERE.

ON SALE SOON!



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